Princess of the Revels

by

L. T. Meade

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/princessofrevels0000ltme

Faith and Kathleen were having a nice time together.

P. B.—*Front.* PAGE 90.

The Princess of the Revels

By

L. T. MEADE

Author of
'Aylwyn's Friends,' 'Betty Vivian,' 'The School Queens,'
'The Court-Harman Girls,' &c.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

by

Percy Tarrant

LONDON: 38 Soho Square, W.

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED

EDINBURGH: 339 High Street

1909

Edinburgh :
Printed by W. & R. Chambers, Limited.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	A DESOLATE HOME	1
II.	BREAKING THE NEWS	11
III.	INTERVIEW WITH AUNT MARGARET	17
IV.	PREPARING TO LEAVE HOME	34
V.	GOOD-BYE	44
VI.	LIFE AT HAREDALE	46
VII.	CHAT WITH A DEAR OLD LADY	62
VIII.	DIANA IS JEALOUS	68
IX.	DIANA IS SPITEFUL	81
X.	A SCHEME OF REVENGE	95
XI.	DIANA PUT OUT	103
XII.	CARICATURING MRS MORTIMER	121
XIII.	FAITH KING SUFFERS	129
XIV.	TROUBLE ABOUT THE SIGNET-RING	137
XV.	FOUND	147
XVI.	A CLEVER PROPOSAL	156
XVII.	MEETING THE RECTOR	166
XVIII.	TELLING THE NEWS	176
XIX.	INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL	190
XX.	A PROPOSAL OF DESPERATION	206
XXI.	A SECOND STRING TO HER BOW	218
XXII.	A GREAT OLD PLACE	229
XXIII.	A GREAT DILEMMA	241
XXIV.	DANGER SIGNALS	257
XXV.	A CALL TO CONSCIENCE	268
XXVI.	THE CLOUDS GROW DARKER	275
XXVII.	PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY	279
XXVIII.	CHECKED, AND CONFESSION	288

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

Faith and Kathleen were having a nice time together. *Frontispiece.*

'Oh my,' said Jane, 'if *this* isn't enough to dazzle 'em!' . 41

The curtain again rose, and there appeared on the scene a little old lady leaning on a stick 123

Kathleen snatched it from her. 'Thank you,' she said . 155

'I will be down on you with the truth' 187

Faith ran up at once to her father, while the other three stood silent 272

BOOKS BY Mrs L. T. MEADE.

AYLWYN'S FRIENDS. Ten Coloured Illustrations by H. C. Earnshaw.....6/-
THE COURT-HARMAN GIRLS. Ten Illustrations by W. Rainey.....6/-
A GIRL FROM AMERICA. Ten Illustrations by Lewis Baumer.....6/-
THE HILL-TOP GIRL. Ten Illustrations by Lewis Baumer.....6/-
A BEVY OF GIRLS. Ten Illustrations by Lewis Baumer.....6/-
THE GIRLS OF MRS PRITCHARD'S SCHOOL. Ten Illustrations by Lewis Baumer..6/-
THE MANOR SCHOOL: A Girl's Story. Ten Illustrations by Lewis Baumer...6/-
GIRLS OF THE FOREST. Ten Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.....6/-
GIRLS OF THE TRUE BLUE. Ten Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.....6/-
SEVEN MAIDS. Illustrated by Percy Tarrant. Gilt edges.....6/-
THE ODDS AND THE EVENS. Illustrated by Percy Tarrant. Gilt edges.....6/-
BETTY VIVIAN. Eight Illustrations by A. S. Boyd.....5/-
THE SCHOOL FAVOURITE. Eight Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.....5/-
THREE GIRLS FROM SCHOOL. Eight Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.....5/-
TURQUOISE AND RUBY. Eight Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.....5/-
WILFUL COUSIN KATE. Eight Illustrations by W. Rainey.....5/-
A MODERN TOMBOY. Eight Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.....5/-
A GAY CHARMER. Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.....5/-
THE REBEL OF THE SCHOOL. Eight Illustrations by W. Rainey.....5/-
A VERY NAUGHTY GIRL. Eight Illustrations by W. Rainey.....5/-
MISS NONENTITY. Illustrated by W. Rainey.....5/-
LIGHT O' THE MORNING. Eight Illustrations by W. Rainey.....5/-
THE GIRLS OF ST WODE'S. Eight Illustrations by W. Rainey.....5/-
WILD KITTY. Eight Illustrations by J. Ayton Symington.....5/-
CATALINA. Eight Illustrations by W. Boucher.....5/-
GIRLS NEW AND OLD. Illustrated by J. Williamson.....5/-
BETTY: A School-Girl. Illustrated by Everard Hopkins.....5/-
THE PRINCESS OF THE REVELS. Six Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.....3/6
THE SCHOOL QUEENS. Six Illustrations by W. Rainey.....3/6
THE SCAMP FAMILY. Eight Illustrations by A. Talbot Smith.....3/6
SUE. Six Illustrations by Clement Flower.....3/6
DUMPS: A Plain Girl. Six Illustrations by R. Lillie.....3/6
PETRONELLA; and THE COMING OF POLLY. Six Illustrations by W. Rainey..3/6
PETER THE PILGRIM. Six Illustrations by Harold Copping.....3/6
QUEEN ROSE. Six Illustrations by J. T. Murray.....3/6
COSEY CORNER; or, How they kept a Farm. Eighteen Illus. by P. Tarrant..3/6
FOUR ON AN ISLAND. Illustrated by W. Rainey.....3/6
THE CHILDREN OF WILTON CHASE. Illustrated by E. Hopkins.....3/6
PLAYMATES. Six Illustrations by G. Nicolet.....2/6
THE SQUIRE'S LITTLE GIRL.....1/-
LITTLE MARY, AND OTHER STORIES. Illustrated.....1/-
A FARTHINGFUL. Illustrated.....6d.
POOR MISS CAROLINA. Illustrated.....6d.
THE GOLDEN LADY. Illustrated.....6d.
CASSIE AND LITTLE MARY. Illustrated.....6d.
A LONELY PUPPY. Illustrated.....6d.
DICKORY DOCK. Illustrated.....6d.

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED, LONDON AND EDINBURGH.

The Princess of the Revels.

CHAPTER I.

A DESOLATE HOME.

THERE was a dusky fog over London; it was not quite black yet, but it would soon be so. The Rector of St Peter's West was seated at breakfast. He was the Reverend Leonard King. He was a thin, wiry-looking man of between forty and fifty years of age. There were many furrows on his face, and his dark, deep-set eyes seemed at times to recede into his head as though great sorrow had caused them to look inwards.

Mr King had known bitter grief. His wife had died three months before the date at which this story opens; and he was left to face his duties without the consolations and help received from the best companionship, the most ardent sympathy, and the greatest tact. He was broken-hearted without his wife; and even his only child—his daughter Faith, aged fifteen years—could do little to console him.

Faith loved her father, but her mother had been her closest friend. Now, in the time of their mutual trouble, these two were rather estranged than brought together. The girl was afraid to mention the beloved name. The father felt anxious about her, puzzled what to do with her; dreading to lose her, and yet

dreading even more to keep her in a place where she could not have the advantages she had hitherto enjoyed.

On this special morning, Faith, in her black frock, her light-brown hair tied back from her expansive forehead, was standing by the breakfast-table pouring out coffee for the Rector. She took a cup of the beverage and laid it by his plate. 'There, father!' she said. 'Don't go on reading your letters. Do take your coffee while it's hot.'

He took up a spoon and began to stir the coffee absently. He was absorbed in the contents of a letter which seemed to interest him much. Suddenly he laid it down and looked across at Faith. 'I must be out all day, my child,' he said. 'I shall have something to eat at the Church House, so you need not expect me back until after evening prayers. You must manage as best you can. Tell cook to have something hot for my supper. But I cannot possibly be home before nine o'clock at the earliest.'

'Very well, father.'

'I wish you would not say "Very well" in that tone, Faith, just as though you were not the least interested in anything.'

The girl's full dark eyes seemed to dilate for a minute. Then she said slowly and half under her breath, 'I would be interested in you, father, if you would let me.'

The Rector dropped his pince-nez and looked across the table at his child. 'Interested in me!' he said slowly. 'But I hoped you were.'

'Yes, I am; but I'd be more so if you would let me share your life.'

'Listen, Faith. I shall have something to talk over with you to-night. In the meantime, make the best of the day. Get through your lessons, practise as much on the pianoforte as your master requires, don't idle a moment, go for a walk with Miss Chance, be

very diligent. Time is precious, my child. After supper to-night I will talk to you.'

'Very well,' she replied in a subdued voice.

The Rector gathered up his papers and left the room. A few minutes later a shadowy figure, only half-seen through the ever-increasing fog, was observed to pass the windows. Faith went close to the fire, warmed herself, then turned to look around her.

The room was desolate, the room was hateful, the atmosphere was depressing. Miss Chance, the daily governess, was not interesting. Faith's music-master only gave her a lesson once a week; that lesson was a slight stimulus. But the whole house seemed weighted with lead.

'It's because of mother,' thought the girl; 'it's the absence of mother.'

She thought for a few minutes of the room where she now found herself as it was three months ago—Mrs King, with her sparkling eyes, her rosy cheeks, her bright, vivacious face, her voice which was so full of music, her understanding manner that seemed to take in the needs of both husband and child.

'Oh mother!' sobbed the girl. She quickly suppressed the tears which were beginning to rain down her cheeks, for an elderly woman opened the door and came slowly in.

'What is it, Martin?'

'Well, I suppose I must clear away,' said Martin. 'Has your pa gone, Miss Faith?'

'Yes.'

'He ain't left no money for me, have he?'

'No, Martin. Do you want any?'

'Do I want any? And he himself, blessed man, giving orders that no debts were to be run up; and the butcher, and the baker, and the candlestick-maker all crying out to be paid—paid—paid! How's poor Martin to pay when the Rector forgets?'

'It is hard on you, Martin,' said the girl. 'But I am going to talk to father to-night, and I will get the money for you. It 's only that he 's overpowered with work and that he forgets. How much money do you want, Martin?'

'Bless you, dear! I want twelve pounds, and not one penny less.'

'Well, I 'll get you that sum to-night.'

'That 'll set us right for a bit,' said Martin, slightly mollified; 'but there 'll be the bills for this week, and next week, and the week after. He remembers nothing—nothing at all. He 's eat up with good works; he 's a very holy man, he be. But, all the same, what I say is true: he is eat up with good works. It usen't to be like this when your ma were alive.'

'Oh Martin—don't!' said the girl. 'I can't bear to talk of her!'

'Well, I won't,' said Martin. She had put the breakfast-things on a large tray. She turned now and faced the girl. 'You 're not looking a bit yourself,' she continued. 'There 's that Miss Chance—she don't know enough to teach you; she 's little better than a nursery governess, and you so clever. But your pa said that she wanted something to do, so she was to be kep' on. Oh, I 's no patience! You wants a bright lady to be with you, and to take the management of the house—a lady who 'll be kind on the surface but worriting inside, and who 'll *make* the Rector give the money that 's necessary to keep up the house. 'Tain't much that Jane and I eats, I 'm sure; and you and Miss Chance hardly has a peck between you. Why, you 're turning sallow, missie—you who had the brightest colour! But there! Eh dear, eh dear, it 's a sorrowful world! And there 's a black fog coming on, and God only knows what accidents there 'll be—folks run over like anything with them motors about, and all.'

'Oh Martie, do try to be a little cheerful!' said Faith, smiling slightly at the woman's lugubrious words.

'Well, and you want new frocks, and a warm winter jacket, and a hat with some style in it. It frets me like anything to see the Rector swallowed up by his good works and the house going to rack and ruin.'

'It won't really go to rack and ruin while you stay, Martin.'

'Well, there!' said the old woman, intensely mollified; 'you has said a kind word, and I'm glad on it, missie. But I may as well be frank, and say that over and over the notion to get away from all this gloom comes to me.'

'But you won't go, dear Martin? You were with —with *her*, you remember. And—oh, please don't leave me alone with only Chance and Jane!'

'There, my pretty one, I won't. Old Martin will fight along. But don't you forget to ask the Rector to-night for the money that's wanted, for I can't and won't be dunned for debt—and that's plain. When did you say he'd be in again, missie?'

'Not until supper-time. He and I will have supper together—just a couple of chops, or something simple of that sort, Martin.'

'I'll see to it, my dear. Well, and there's Miss Chance running up the steps. I told Jane to light a good fire in your schoolroom. There'll be plenty for you to eat, lovey, whoever else goes without.'

Miss Chance was a thin woman, undersized, with faded hair which in her youth might have been golden, but was now nearly hay-coloured. She had high cheek-bones, slightly prominent teeth, and weak eyes. She had a kind, somewhat timid face, and a sort of apologetic manner which was rather irritating than otherwise.

Miss Chance had to work hard for her living, and

the great anxiety of her existence was to please those who employed her. She was fond of Faith without in the very least understanding this passionate, tempestuous young girl. But Faith had inherited some of her mother's qualities; and although she knew only too well that she could never be really educated by a woman like Miss Chance, she bore with the good creature's want of knowledge with exemplary patience, and received her now with a gentle smile.

'I am ever so sorry, dear!' said Miss Chance, bustling into the schoolroom and removing her warm fur and her old-fashioned hat. 'I know I am five minutes late. It is most provoking and inexcusable. You won't complain of me to your father, will you, dear Faith?'

'Certainly not,' said Faith.

'That is so kind of you, my love! I am ever so much obliged. The Rector is very exact—exceedingly punctilious and particular. Quite right too, I always say. What is a woman worth if she cannot keep her appointments? But the fact is, I met an old friend just at the corner of Sloane Street, and the temptation to talk to her was too great to be resisted.'

'Never mind, you are really in plenty of time,' said Faith.

'Do you think so, love? It is sweet of you to say so. Isn't the fog very smarting to the eyes? Don't you find it so, Faith?'

'My eyes are strong,' said Faith.

'The fog is going to get worse, I am sure. My friend thought so too, she quite agreed with me. Now then, shall we begin our pleasant routine of work? It is delightful to have an intelligent pupil—particularly one like you, Faith—one so very original. You plan the work, and then we get along swimmingly. What is your idea for to-day?'

Faith's eyes sparkled, and there came a new light into her usually downcast little face. 'We'll do the

most exciting episodes in history,' she said, 'and we 'll start right away at the French Revolution. What 's the good of plodding through all those dull details? Let 's get to something thrilling and sensational.'

'Thrilling and sensational? Precisely, my love.'

'Afterwards,' continued Faith, 'we 'll read a novel turn about.'

'A novel, dear?'

'Yes,' said Faith. 'There 's a vast lot to be learnt out of novels.'

'A novel of Scott's perhaps, dear?'

'Oh no, not Scott. I want a modern novel—something that gives one a picture of life to-day.'

'Well, dearest—but would the Rector approve?'

Faith was silent for a minute. Then she said quietly, 'The Rector leaves me to spend my time as I like, and I like romantic history and novels. Afterwards we will go for a walk and get lost in the fog.'

'I should be terrified, dearest.'

'Oh no, you wouldn't. It would be great fun. Now, let 's begin right away.'

Miss Chance was neither great at history nor at current literature, but she was as wax in the hands of Faith King. Soon they had plunged into the horrors of the French Revolution. They read passages turn in turn about. Miss Chance read very badly, stumbling over her words. Faith read well for her age. She was excited and interested. Presently she forgot to give the book back to Miss Chance, and read on by herself.

'That is thrilling!' said the governess as Faith shut the book with a bang.

Jane appeared with cocoa and bread-and-butter for the two ladies. Miss Chance seized her cup of cocoa and bread-and-butter hungrily; Faith attacked her food more moderately.

Miss Chance again looked out of the window and

remarked on the gathering fog. 'It really will be dangerous to go out,' she said.

'Does that mean that the fog injures your poor eyes?' asked the girl.

'It hurts them dreadfully, dear.'

'Then I tell you what. You shall stay at home by the fire. You can put your feet on the fender and read anything you like. A fresh box of books has just come from Mudie's; I will ransack it for your benefit, and bring you the most fascinating novel I can find. Meanwhile Jane and I can go for a walk.'

'You are sure—certain—that your father won't mind? I have a bit of a cold, and my eyes smart dreadfully.'

'Father won't mind, because he won't know,' said Faith. 'Yes, we'll do that; and I'll take my walk at once. We can do our novel-reading after lunch. I will bring you a book. Tell Jane to get ready, and then we'll be off.'

'You'll be certain not to get lost?'

'I—lost! No, I sha'n't be lost.'

Faith left the room, returning in a few minutes with two or three harmless-looking novels of a milk-and-water description, which she laid at her governess's side. She then went upstairs, put on her coat and hat, slipped a very small supply of money into her coat pocket, and by-and-by had left the house, accompanied by Jane.

Jane was the housemaid and the quondam parlour-maid. In Mrs King's days there had been a very neat parlour-maid at the Rectory; but she had been dismissed after that good lady's death, and Jane, after a fashion, took her place.

Jane was short and squat, round of face, and round of figure. She was devoted to Faith, and thought it great fun to take a walk with her.

'The fog do be thick, miss.'

'Yes, Jane; but we know our way.'

'I wouldn't like to be run over, miss. The feel o' a great dray crunchin' your bones couldn't be pleasant.'

'But a dray won't crunch your bones, Jane. Take my hand at this crossing, and come along.'

'Where be we a-goin' to, missie?'

'To the florist's at the corner.'

Jane was silent. She knew—as also did Mrs Martin, as also did Miss Chance—that Faith visited the florist's once a week; that at the florist's she expended as large a sum of money as she could collect in buying white flowers to lay on her mother's grave.

They accomplished the great crossing in safety, and Jane waited outside the shop while Faith entered. She soon came back with a few white chrysanthemums.

'They're very dear to-day,' said Faith in a mournful voice. 'But come along, Jane, do. Let's be quick. We shall just have time to get to the cemetery and back before Chancy wants her dinner.'

'I like walkin' fast, missie. It's less bitin' cold when you're warmed up with hexercise.'

The cemetery was nearly half a mile away, but at last they reached it.

Jane refused to go in; she would walk up and down outside the gates. 'I 'as a 'orror o' the dead,' she said under her breath; but she would not dare to say those words aloud to Faith.

The girl passed swiftly through the open gates; found, even through the ever-thickening fog, the grave which she sought; laid the white flowers carefully on it; and then, looking round her and perceiving that there was no one in sight, she flung herself down on the cold and sodden turf and moaned under her breath, 'Mother! oh mother! oh mother!' She forgot the cold in her anguish; but after a time, noticing that some people were approaching, she got up and went back to Jane.

'My teeth do be a-chatterin', miss; an' I am glad as you 's come.'

'It 's cold for those who are dead to-day, Jane.'

'Don't let 's talk o' them, please, miss.'

'I won't. We will walk very quickly home.'

They got back to the Rectory without let or hindrance, but not before Miss Chance, in a wild state of excitement, had gone from fireplace to window and from window to fireplace again. The cold of the window chilled and hurt her; the comfort of the fire drew her. But she was terribly afraid. If anything happened to Faith King she was lost! She had failed twice in her duty that morning: first, by talking to her old friend and being late of keeping her appointment; second, by allowing Faith to go out alone with Jane.

'She is a splendid girl,' thought Miss Chance; 'but she is too much for me. I dare not even whisper it to myself, but she knows a vast lot more than I do. Still, I must keep this post at any cost.'

CHAPTER II.

BREAKING THE NEWS.

FAITH obeyed her father's injunction to spend the day, as he expressed it, diligently. Soon after lunch—a very scanty meal, by the way—her music-master arrived. Faith had a passion for music, and enjoyed this hour the best in the whole week. When it was over she joined Miss Chance in the cheerful schoolroom, and began to read aloud a very innocent novel which this good lady had begun while the girl was out.

By-and-by the short winter's day drew to a close. The governess took leave, and Faith went upstairs to her own room to tidy herself for her father's arrival. He would not be in until nine o'clock, but he would arrive then punctually. He always kept his appointments to the very letter. He was the last man to make a promise and break it. Faith had had a private consultation with Martin, and had arranged that the supper was to be extra nice. There was to be good soup, and Martin had a knack of preparing chops better than any one else; then there was her father's bottle of ale left ready just where he most liked to have it.

Faith had just finished her preparations—had seen that the fire was bright and the room tidy—when the Rector, tired, cold, chilled to the bone, entered.

He smiled at sight of his daughter. 'This is nice!' he said. 'This is as it ought to be!' He kissed her almost affectionately.

At this stage in her growth no one could have called Faith King a handsome girl. But her face was full of possibilities; her hair was very thick

and abundant and much lighter than her eyebrows and eyes, her features were straight and good, her eyes full of great intelligence. She was a well-grown girl, and on this special night the Rector felt that he could be proud of Faith. Nevertheless, he had firmly made up his mind.

'I would not have any dinner, father,' said the girl. 'I was determined to share your supper; and see! it is specially nice. Let me help you to some soup.'

The Rector was hungry. His day's work was done. He enjoyed his soup, and chop, and bottle of ale; and, when he had finished a particularly nice pudding which Martin had made for him, he sat back satisfied in his chair.

'Now your pipe,' said Faith. She filled it dexterously and gave it to him, holding out a match for him to strike and light the tobacco with.

He sat back for a minute or two, luxuriating in the sense of warmth and comfort, and looking through a haze of tobacco-smoke at the girl, who had drawn up a chair at the opposite side of the hearth. 'We never use the drawing-room now,' he said abruptly.

Faith shuddered inwardly, but outwardly she was quite calm. 'No,' she said after a pause; 'we don't want it.'

'That is true,' replied the Rector. He smoked on in dreamy content.

Faith was watching her opportunity. After a moment she said, 'Daddy, darling, I don't want to bother you, but Martin wishes to pay the tradespeople.'

'My love! of course she does! Why doesn't she do it?'

'But, daddy, she has no money; you have forgotten to give her a cheque for a couple of weeks. You forbid her to go into debt; but when you also forget to draw cheques what is the poor thing to do?'

'Dear, dear!' said the Rector. 'Dear, dear! how thoughtless of me! What is the sum that she wants, Faith? I have a couple of sovereigns in my pocket; will that be sufficient?'

'No, daddy, I am afraid not. She says she must have twelve pounds at least to put arrears right.'

The Rector was the last sort of man to fret about money. He was by no means rich—very few rectors of the present day are; but he regarded the silver and the gold as the Lord's, not his. 'You know where I keep my cheque-book, don't you, Faith?' he said after a pause. As he spoke he thrust his hand into his waistcoat pocket and took out a little bunch of bright keys.

Faith went to his *secrétaire*, unlocked a certain drawer, and took out his cheque-book. He filled in a cheque for the required amount, tore it out, gave it to the girl, and desired her to put the book back in its place. She did so, then sat down in comfort by his side. 'You are so nice, daddy!' she said. She felt in a loving, appreciative mood that night.

'That reminds me,' he said. He took her hand and clasped it tightly. 'The present arrangement can't go on. I shall keep Martin, of course, and Jane; but I have an invitation for you, Faith.'

'Father!'

'My dear child, don't look at me like that. Your aunt, Lady Ludlow of Haredale, wants you to go and stay with her for a bit—how long I cannot quite say, but I fancy for a considerable time. I had a letter from her this morning—— Don't, Faith! What are you trembling about?'

'Only that I don't mean to go,' said Faith.

'My dear, dear child! Is your father's daughter to speak like that? You will be very happy with the Ludlows. In any case, my love, I have written accepting the invitation for you. You must think of your dear, dear mother; Lady Ludlow was her sister.

And there are your cousins—Jacqueline, Diana, Gertrude, and Patience; you will be very happy with them. My sister-in-law wishes to treat you exactly as though you were her own child. She has an excellent governess—a certain Miss Price; and you will have lessons with your cousins. Lady Ludlow—your Aunt Margaret—is coming to town next week. She will stay for a few days at the Ritz Hotel, and she wants to see you. She offered to provide you with a suitable wardrobe. I shall, of course, pay for it, dear; you will be in no way beholden to her. In short, I have arranged all that, and it is to be. Now, what is the matter, my child?'

'You want to part me from you—to take me away from this house where—where mother lived—and—and—died!'

'Only for a short time, Faith. Now, listen and be reasonable. We all have trials; but I have noticed in life that our greatest trials, if taken aright, turn into our greatest blessings. You are not happy at home, my poor little girl! Miss Chance is not suitable as your governess. Tell me, dear, what lessons you did with her to-day?'

'Oh father,' said Faith, half-laughing, half-colouring, half-crying, 'we get on very well together!'

'Nevertheless, tell me exactly what you did? What lessons did you get through?'

'We read a lot of Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution*'——

'H'm! So you are as far on in history as that period?'

'Not as far on,' replied Faith truthfully; 'but I like exciting episodes. I read to her, and she read a little to me. Afterwards I went out.'

'You both did, I suppose?'

'No, poor Chancy was suffering from her eyes—the fog hurt them—so I took Jane. Jane is very good.'

'Well, dear, what else did you do?'

'After lunch, father, I had my music-lesson; and then Chancy and I read again together.'

'On what subject, dear?'

Faith coloured. Suddenly she burst out laughing. 'It was about a girl who went to Canada.'

'That sounds all very improving and interesting,' said the Rector; 'but you cannot call it education. In your mother's time it was different.'

'Oh yes—oh yes! But that time has gone for ever.'

'That special time has certainly gone, but there may be a good period before you. Anyhow, my love, it is settled. You go to your Aunt Margaret. She will love you, and be very kind to you, for your mother's sake; and your cousins will, I know, treat you as a sister.'

'But, father, what is to become of poor Chancy?'

'I have thought of her, and I greatly hope that I have got another post for her with some very little children. She is not suited to teach you.'

Faith was silent. She knew in her heart of hearts that her father was right.

Presently she went up to her bedroom. It was a dreary little room at the top of the house. In her mother's time it had been bright and cheerful enough. On such a cold and foggy evening as this there would have been a fire in the grate, and Mrs King would have come upstairs with her little daughter and seen that everything was bright and comfortable. But Faith herself, since her mother's death, had forbidden any special care to be taken of her bedroom. She had a curious, jealous feeling with regard to any one else taking her mother's place. She rather revelled in a sense of discomfort which would but accentuate the loss which she never ceased to feel. Now, as she entered the desolate, cold room, she turned the key in the lock, flung herself down by her bedside, and burst into floods of bitter weeping.

'Oh mother! why did you let him do it?' she moaned. 'Darling! God took you, and you could not but go when God took you; and I have tried—oh, so very hard!—to be patient—so very, very hard. But, mother—my own mother!—why, why does he send me away? I want to take your place as well as I can. I cannot endure to leave him. It seems to break the last link between you and me. Oh mother, are you very cold in your grave to-night; and do you miss your little Faith? Your own Faith is very cold, mother—very cold! I am glad to be cold when I think of you. Oh, oh! I am terribly unhappy!'

The poor child cried until she could cry no longer; then, at last exhausted, she crept into bed; and finally kind Sleep visited her, and drew her away from all her misery into his sheltering arms.

CHAPTER III.

INTERVIEW WITH AUNT MARGARET.

WHEN Faith awoke the next morning it was to find a totally different state of things. The sun was shining—absolutely shining—through the begrimed dirty window. She sprang out of bed with a sensation that something fresh and pleasant was about to happen. Then she recalled her father's words of the night before; but, curious as it may seem, the thought of what lay immediately in front of her did not depress her this morning as it had done last night.

She owned to herself that she wanted change—that Miss Chance would never be able to educate her as her mother's daughter ought to be educated; also, that she would like to see Aunt Margaret (whom, as a matter of fact, she hardly remembered), and that it might be interesting to see her cousins.

'So, just for a very short visit, I will go to Haredale,' thought the girl; 'and if father has really got another post for Chancy no one will suffer much in my absence. I will go for a fortnight, or perhaps three weeks.'

She dressed in haste, and ran downstairs to find coffee on the table, and her father busy, as usual, over his morning's post. He allowed her to kiss his cheek without even looking up to respond to her greeting. She took her place by the coffee-urn, poured out a cup for her father, and brought it to him. It was only twenty-four hours since she had done precisely the same thing, and yet in that time all the wide world seemed to have changed.

Perhaps it was the effect of the sun, which was shining even more brilliantly into the dining-room than it had done into Faith's bedroom. Certainly the absence of that dismal fog of yesterday made all the difference in everything.

'Faith,' said her father, looking up suddenly, 'your Aunt Margaret is in town. I have had a letter from her. She wants you to go and have lunch with her at the Ritz Hotel. You had better take Miss Chance with you.'

'Oh—but, father—poor Chancy!'

'I have satisfactory news for Miss Chance. I heard also to-day from the lady I spoke to yesterday about her. She wants Miss Chance to call on her; and I have not the slightest doubt that, with my recommendation, she will get the post.'

'Chancy is very good,' said the girl. 'She can't help having weak eyes and knowing very little about everything.'

'She will know enough to teach the very little children who will be put under her care by my friend Mrs Lacey. My dear, I must hurry out, as usual. Meanwhile, I will give you a note, which you are to present to Miss Chance when she arrives. Then she is to take you to the Ritz Hotel and leave you there. Your Aunt Margaret will doubtless see you home; she will make all arrangements with regard to the date of your visit to Haredale.'

'Yes, father. Father dear, I thought perhaps—perhaps, at a stretch—three weeks might do.'

'My dear, dear child!' the Rector frowned perceptibly, 'you must leave all these matters in the hands of your aunt. You know that I truly love you, Faith; but I should not be just to your beloved mother's memory if I did not do what was right for you.'

'Father, I can't give you up!'

'Nor do I wish you to. You are fifteen now. At

eighteen you will be able to come back to me—educated, lady-like, ready to take the head of the establishment, and be my right hand in all matters connected with the parish.'

Faith felt her heart in her mouth. 'Am I not to see you for three years?'

'Certainly, my darling. But we will arrange those things with your Aunt Margaret. By the way, Faith, when talking to her, please say that I should like to meet her—at her convenience, of course. Only, give her to understand that I am a very busy man—that my time is not my own; but I can call on her late some evening, or perhaps she would not greatly mind coming here.'

'Oh, I am sure she wouldn't mind, daddy. Darling daddy, don't look so pale and sad!'

'I am very much relieved about you, my dear, and very glad that you are brave and acting as your mother's daughter ought to act. Now I will write my letter, which you will present to Miss Chance.'

The Rector wrote a note rapidly, Faith standing by the fire and watching him. He had never, in any measure, held the same position in her heart as her mother had done. Still, he was her father, and she loved him dearly. She noticed now an ominous stoop between his shoulders, and how thin his hair looked at the back; in short, although by no means really old, the Rector of St Peter's seemed to have aged considerably during the last few months. He finished his letter, put it into an envelope, addressed it to Miss Chance, and then, turning, gave it to his daughter. 'Now, my love, good-bye—good-bye. I shall hear all your news to-night.'

'Yes, daddy darling.'

A minute later the Rector went away. Faith watched him just as she had done yesterday—from the dining-room windows. His slight figure was not in shadow to-day, for the sun was shining on it. She

held Miss Chance's letter in her hand. Martin came in with her great tray, prepared to remove the breakfast-things.

'Martin,' said Faith, 'I've got your cheque for you.'

'Ah, that's a good missie! Twelve pounds, is it, now?'

'Yes, Martin; here it is.'

Martin took the cheque from Faith's hand, folded it up, and slipped it into her pocket.

'Don't tear it by mistake or throw it into the fire,' said the girl anxiously. Then she added, 'I don't think father has got too much money.'

'You needn't talk to me about being careful with cheques; they are hard to get, and I know their value. You ought to go out for a long walk—you and that governess—this sunshiny day. I'll prepare a little bit of mince for your lunch, and some fried potatoes. You'll like that, won't you?'

'Perhaps Chancy will like the lunch, Martin; but I sha'n't be here.'

Martin immediately stood bolt upright, placing her arms akimbo. 'Now, whatever do this mean?' she asked. 'You not here?'

'Martin, I have news for you.'

Martin came close up to the girl and looked at her attentively. 'Miss Faith, you're fretting; and that's wrong, and what would grieve that blessed one were she to see you.'

'Perhaps she does see me, Martin. Anyhow, I want comfort very much. Dear Martin, I am going away on a visit.'

'The Lord be thanked for all His mercies!' was Martin's rejoinder.

'Why, Martin, I did think you'd miss me!'

'Miss you, child? Why, bless your heart! of course I'll miss you. But that ain't the point. The point is this—that you're struggling and struggling

against a weight of grief that 'll kill a young lassie if it ain't lightened. And who 's that Chance woman, I 'd like to know, to have the bringing up of one like you ? '

'She 's not so bad. She means very kindly. And, oh Martin, there 's my father ! '

'Bless him ! ' said Martin; 'but he 's eat up with good works.'

'Martin, I do think, when the Rector spends all his time toiling and slaving for others, that you ought not—you ought not to speak of him like that.'

'I always speaks my mind,' said Martin.

'But don't you think he will miss me ? '

'A tweeny bit, per'aps,' said Martin. 'His works 'll swallow up all his thoughts. It 's right you should go; I 'm glad of it, and Rector 's right to send you. Rector 's a good man. Is it to school you are going, love ? '

'No,' replied Faith, 'I am going on a visit to my aunt, Lady Ludlow, at Haredale in Yorkshire.'

'Well, that is as it should be; only you 'll want a sight of new clothes. The missis would like that. She often and often spoke of her sister. She was very fond of her, although they didn't often meet—never but once as far back as I can remember.'

'I wonder why ? ' said Faith.

'I can't tell you, my dear; but I 'm glad Lady Ludlow 's doin' the right thing now.'

'Do you mean even to hint,' said Faith, her eyes flashing—'even to hint that Lady Ludlow—Aunt Margaret—did not care for mother ? '

'I think nothing of the sort. They didn't meet of late, that 's all I 've got to say. She 's doing the straight thing by you now, missie; and you cling on to her, for it 's a mighty fine chance for you, and that I will say.'

Martin left the room; and Faith remained, absorbed in her anxious thoughts, until she saw Miss Chance

running up the steps of the front entrance. Faith ran and opened the door to her.

'Come in, Chancy—do!' said the girl. 'Isn't it nice and bright to-day? And aren't your poor eyes better?'

'Yes, dear, much better. How are you, Faith?'

'Oh, I am better too. Come right into the parlour, Chancy. I told Jane not to light the fire in the schoolroom.'

'My dear! and why so? You know perfectly well that I like our lessons to be conducted in an orderly fashion.'

'All the same, we sha'n't want the schoolroom to-day,' said Faith. 'We can get through anything we have time for in here. Sit down, Chancy. Will you take off your cloak and unfasten your hat?'

Miss Chance looked full up into the animated face of the girl. 'Has anything—happened?' she asked, and fear lurked in her eyes.

'Something *has* happened; but—oh! you needn't be so sad, for father and I are the last people in the world to forget you or to cease to do things for you. But I will just tell you everything as quickly as possible. I have an aunt. Her name is Lady Ludlow. She lives in Yorkshire—in a big place called Haredale. She has got four girls; they have such pretty names. I remember them well, for I have never been tired of asking mother to tell me about them. Diana is the eldest, then there's Jacqueline, then Gertrude, and then little Patience. My aunt wants me to go to Haredale for—well, for a time; and father wishes it —in fact, he has arranged it. Dear Chancy, don't turn so ghastly white!'

'In the winter—and all!' said poor Miss Chance. 'In the cold, cold weather, and with so many out of employment!'

'But, indeed, you won't be out of employment; don't think it for a single second. If I feared

that I'd make Aunt Margaret invite you also to Haredale; but it isn't necessary. See, here's a letter from father; it is for you. Read it and be comforted.'

'You're a dear, kind child!' said Miss Chance, tears springing to her eyes.

The Rector's letter was short and to the point:

'DEAR MISS CHANCE,—I am forced to make fresh arrangements for my daughter Faith, and in consequence must dispense with your services. You have been very good to her, and I am sure she will never forget you. I can well understand your position —thrown suddenly out of employment at this time of year. But I have a great friend—a certain Mrs Lacey, who lives in Onslow Gardens. She wants a governess for her little children, and I know she will give you the post and quite as good a salary as you get from me. She expects you to call on her to-day, when you can doubtless arrange matters. Meanwhile, have the goodness to accompany Faith in a hansom to the Ritz Hotel. You can leave her there, and go on to fulfil your appointment with Mrs Lacey.—Yours sincerely, LEONARD KING.'

'The Rector is good,' said Miss Chance. She folded up the letter and sat very white and still.

'Tisn't so dreadfully bad, is it, Chancy?' asked Faith.

'In one way, perhaps not, dear; but I shall lose you, and I love you very dearly, Faith.'

'And I love you, Chancy.'

'I know you do. You are a dear child! You have put up with my ignorance all this time.'

Faith smiled slightly. 'As if that mattered!' she said. 'You don't know a great deal, but you know enough to teach the little Laceys.'

'Yes, love—yes. Thank you so much! And so

you are going away? I suppose I ought to rejoice for you.'

'Don't!' said Faith suddenly, 'for I hate going.'

Miss Chance looked at her pupil with speculative eyes. 'The Rector will miss you,' she said after a pause; 'but perhaps the person who will miss you most will be myself. Every morning when I wake I think of the hours that I spend in your society—of your goodness and cheerfulness. And now I must confess something to you. I have been suffering from a dreadful burden on my mind. I have been feeling that I ought to have told the Rector that I was not fit to teach you.'

'Oh Chancy! we get on splendidly together; and we learn a lot, both of us.'

'But, my dear, you are growing a big girl. Oh, I know I am right! Even if you had stayed on in London I should have been forced to speak to the Rector on the subject of your education. It was different altogether in your mother's time. I worked under her, and'——

'Don't talk of that!' said Faith suddenly. 'There 's the novel we began yesterday. Put your feet on the fender and get well toasted. I am going up to my room to prepare for my visit to Aunt Margaret.'

During Mrs King's life, Faith had been well and becomingly dressed; but neither the Rector nor Martin knew anything whatever about clothes. And now her heavy mourning, although not exactly shabby, was certainly wanting in the slightest attempt at style. The girl put on her best frock and warm coat, fixed her hat over her quantities of fair hair, and looked for a minute at her face in the glass.

'I am ugly—I am awkward. It isn't reasonable to suppose that people will like me,' thought Faith King. 'Nevertheless, I am as God made me, and I am not going to fret about what can't be cured.' She little knew, as she ran downstairs, what possibilities that

small face of hers possessed, nor what a noble expression her full, lofty brow gave to her countenance.

Miss Chance and Faith spent a somewhat desultory morning together, and at a quarter to one they got into a hansom and drove to the Ritz Hotel.

On hearing that Lady Ludlow was within, Miss Chance bade her pupil good-bye and went off to fulfil her own engagement. Faith, with a new sense of timidity, stepped into the lift. She was carried swiftly up to the third story, and was then conducted by a powdered and liveried footman in the direction of Lady Ludlow's apartments.

That lady had a suite of rooms opening one into the other; and when the man flung open the door and announced Miss King, and Faith had a glimpse of bright curtains, and heaps of brilliant flowers, and a sunshiny, warm room, her heart quailed for a moment.

But the next instant two kind hands were held out to her; a stately lady with a look of her mother, and yet very different, gazed earnestly into her face, then bent forward and kissed her affectionately. 'I am your Aunt Margaret, and you are my dear little niece. I am delighted you have come. Diana and Jacqueline will be back in a moment, they are out shopping with Miss Price. Sit down, dear. Wouldn't you like to unfasten your jacket?'

'Yes, very much,' said Faith.

'I will take you straightway into my bedroom. You can take your jacket off, and also your hat. Come now, at once; we shall be sitting down to lunch in five minutes' time.' Faith followed her aunt into a large room as luxuriously furnished as was the sitting-room.

Lady Ludlow was kindness itself. She helped the girl to remove her hat, and then praised her rich abundance of light-brown hair. 'You have wonderfully thick hair,' she said. 'Diana will quite envy

you. Jacqueline has a perfect mane, but then she is so dark one might almost suppose she was an Italian. Now come back to the sitting-room, my love, and let us have a cosy talk together. Put yourself into this comfortable chair; make yourself quite at home, Faith. You know, of course, that you are to be my little girl in the future?'

Faith had hardly spoken since her arrival, but now she raised her eyes and looked full into her Aunt Margaret's face. 'I am sure you mean to be very kind, Aunt Margaret,' she said; 'but I can never be anybody's little girl except mother's—and father's. I can be your niece, and I hope—I will try to be very good; but I can be nobody else's little girl.'

'My child, these are very early days to come to fixed resolutions!' replied Lady Ludlow. 'Ah, here come the girls and Miss Price!'

Some gay, laughing voices were heard in the corridor outside; the room door was burst open, and a tall, fair girl entered, followed immediately by a shorter, dark-eyed, laughing, mischievous sprite of a creature, who was followed again by a prim governess who wore spectacles.

Lady Ludlow made the necessary introductions. 'Diana, this is your Cousin Faith.—Jacqueline, your Cousin Faith.—Miss Price, behold your new pupil!'

Diana shook hands somewhat stiffly with Faith; but Jacqueline ran up to her and kissed her.

'How do you like me?' said Jacqueline, putting her head a little to one side, and raising dancing eyes as bright as a robin's to her cousin's face.

'I don't know you well enough to like you at all yet,' replied Faith.

Jacqueline laughed merrily. 'Oh mother, mother!' she cried, 'isn't it fun to see any one quite so honest as Cousin Faith?'

'Well, dears,' said Lady Ludlow, 'I trust you will all be very good friends. I think lunch is ready, and

we had better go into the dining-room.—Had you a satisfactory morning, Miss Price?'

'Yes, very,' replied Miss Price; 'only I am afraid the girls were very extravagant.'

'We'll tell you all about it at lunch, mums,' said Jacqueline. 'We have had quite a glorious time. 'Tis fun to have *carte-blanche* to get what one likes in the London shops.—I wonder, Faith, if you're fond of shopping?'

'No, I am not,' said Faith. 'I never shop.'

'I think, dear,' said Lady Ludlow, 'you will do a little shopping. After lunch you and Miss Price will go out together. But I will talk to you afterwards on that subject.'

Faith, as she followed her cousins, who were suitably but elegantly dressed, felt her own clumsiness to an almost uncomfortable degree. During lunch Diana did not speak very much, but she looked several times at Faith.

Jacqueline kept on chattering. 'We bought this, and we bought that,' she said. 'Oh, the parcels that will come home! and the fun—the fun of opening them! And—do you know what we did?—Miss Price, may we tell?'

'Yes, my dear,' said Miss Price, who seemed to be a very silent and yet kind individual. 'You may tell your mother anything you wish.'

'Well, then, we have been downright extravagant. We have bought the most dreamlike dresses for Gerty and Patty. You know, mother, Christmas isn't so very far away, so we've got some real party-frocks—all white, of course, because'——

Here Jacqueline glanced at Faith. Her eyes softened. Faith's heavy mourning was not carried out by her cousins; their dresses were dark-gray, with sashes of black, and black hats.

'We *shall* have fun at Christmas!' continued Jacqueline; 'particularly if the Ross girls are coming,

and those funny, dear Irish creatures the MacMahons. Mother, do promise that you'll let us, the very moment we get back to Haredale, send invitations to the Rosses and MacMahons! Then, with Faith and ourselves, we shall be able to get up charades and all kinds of Christmas fun.'

Faith kept opening her big dark eyes wider and wider. What a change from this time yesterday, when she had sat beside Miss Chance and eaten a very meagre lunch, and afterwards had recourse to that wishy-washy novel about the girl who went to Canada!

When lunch came to an end Lady Ludlow drew her niece aside. 'Faith, I want to have a little talk with you.'

'Yes, Aunt Margaret.'

'I wish to do my very best for you.'

'Thank you, Aunt Margaret.'

'You are your mother's child. I loved her dearly—dearly.'

The great dark eyes of the girl softened. 'Did you?' she said.

'Yes, my love, I did. I should not have an easy moment if I did not do my duty by her child.'

'If you loved mother, then I shall love you,' said Faith.

Lady Ludlow took one of Faith's hands and squeezed it. 'That is a bargain, my dear,' she said. 'But now we have no time to talk sentiment. We are returning to Haredale the day after to-morrow, and of course you will accompany us.'

'Oh, so soon!' Faith gave a faint cry.

'My dear little girl, whenever you leave home you will suffer pain, and the sooner it is over the better. Believe me, in our bright house you will be happy. You will have gay young companions, kindness will surround you, you will be treated in all respects as our own child.'

'Father said,' continued Faith, her lips trembling slightly, 'that he would like to talk to you, Aunt Margaret, before you took me away.'

'Certainly, my dear; I shall be quite pleased to see him.' But Lady Ludlow's tone was not altogether cordial.

'Father said,' continued Faith, 'that he—he would come to you—if—you—could not come to him.'

'If I could not come to him?' repeated Lady Ludlow.

'He is very busy,' continued Faith; 'he is occupied every moment of every day. So he said that perhaps you would come to him. Do you think you could come to-night, Aunt Margaret?'

'Let me think,' said Lady Ludlow. 'When will he be in?'

'He is always home at nine o'clock.'

'Very well, I will take you back then.'

'Oh, I must go long before then! Chancy is calling for me.'

'Who is Chancy, dear?'

'She is my late governess. I love her very dearly.'

'You will not be ready to go with her for some little time, but if you particularly wish to go home with her you can do so. I will give directions that when she comes she is to be shown into a private sitting-room and given every attention. Yes, I think I can manage to call at the Rectory at nine this evening. I cannot possibly do so to-morrow; I shall be much too busy. And now, Faith, you will want a good many things which Miss Price is ready to buy for you.'

'But—please, Aunt Margaret—not out of *your* money!'

'I have arranged those matters with your father, my dear. What you have to do is to be a good little girl and obey my wishes. I shall endeavour to love you very dearly, my child, and to win your heart.

Now I will call Miss Price; you and she can have a little talk together.'

'The carriage is at the door, my lady,' said a servant, entering at that moment.

'I must leave you, Faith. I have to pay some calls with Diana and Jacqueline. Isn't Diana pretty, and isn't Jacqueline just a little sprite?'

'I like Jacqueline better than Diana,' said Faith.

'You must try not to make favourites, dear. Now I will ring for Miss Price.'

Miss Price appeared. She was tall, slender, and graceful. She would have been pretty but for her somewhat disfiguring glasses; but she had a calm, sensible face—a sort of repose about her which was very grateful. Her pupils were evidently not in the least afraid of her, and she was treated in all respects as one of the family.

'Miss Price, will you order a hansom—or a taxi-meter—and take Faith round to the different shops and get just what is necessary for her? She will want everything, remember, Miss Price: a suitable trunk (or rather trunks), hat-box, straps for her rugs, &c. You know just what a young lady's wardrobe ought to be. You will see about it, will you not?'

'I will, Lady Ludlow,' said Miss Price.

Lady Ludlow left the room, and Faith looked up at the governess. She was certainly a great contrast to Chancy of the weak eyes. The governess looked back at the girl.

'Now,' said Miss Price in a comfortable tone, 'I can well see that you are feeling very miserable; but you have no reason to feel so, none whatsoever. You will be a happy girl at Haredale—or, at least, if you are not it will be your own fault. Please tell me, as well as you can, exactly what dresses you need, and I will endeavour to provide you with a suitable outfit.'

'Oh, I think I have plenty,' said poor Faith.

'My dear, you have never lived in a house like Haredale, or you would scarcely say that.'

'I have two black frocks—one for everyday and one for best. This is my best.'

'And nothing else?' asked Miss Price. 'No evening-dresses or anything of that sort?'

'I had plenty when dear, dear mother was alive—I mean I had suitable childish dresses; but I don't want anything of that sort at the Rectory.'

'Well, dear, you can understand that at Haredale you must be dressed quite as well as your cousins; Lady Ludlow would not permit anything else. Now, leave the matter in my hands.'

'I will if I must,' said Faith, softening.

'Only, you understand that I don't think you need have any pride in the matter. I am given to understand that the money has been provided, and not by Lady Ludlow.'

'Oh, thank you!' said Faith, brightening for a moment, but then becoming depressed again; 'only, I know that father is poor.'

'You have fretted a great deal too much, dear little girl; but you will find your life very different at Haredale. I can speak in the kindest way of my pupils; they are, all four, dear children. When you are with us you will be a party of five. We strictly follow out the old motto that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." There is plenty of play, and work also, at Haredale. Now, dear, shall we go out? Just put yourself in my hands. I am accustomed to attending to the wardrobes of my four pupils, and will do just the same for you.'

The rest of that afternoon passed in a sort of whirl. Faith, accompanied by Miss Price (to whom she had already taken a great fancy), was driven from one shop to another. The amount of dresses that were ordered for her, the number of jackets, the hats, the gloves, the ties, even the furs—Faith had never

worn fur before in her life—bewildered the girl. Miss Price seemed to remember every single thing. There were white dresses—simple, soft white, without a speck of black on them—for the evenings. There were also one or two black dresses.

'To wear when we are quite alone, which scarcely ever happens,' continued Miss Price.

But Faith, although she was fitted, and pulled about, and had things tried on, took little or no interest in all these proceedings. All her desire was that the ordeal should come to an end, and that she should find herself safe back again at St Peter's Rectory.

'Well,' said Miss Price as she was leaving a very smart shop in Bond Street, 'I will bring the young lady again to-morrow to have that costume finally arranged; it must be sent not later than seven o'clock in the evening to St Peter's Rectory, Edgecumbe Street. Be sure you make that hat quite stylish, and don't forget to forward the furs with the rest of the things.'

'Do people ever get frightful headaches from having too many clothes to wear?' was Faith's inquiry of Miss Price as they were driving back to the Ritz Hotel.

'Never, to my knowledge. It is true I have heard of headaches from having too few garments,' remarked Miss Price.

'I feel crushed down and overpowered,' said Faith.

'You will get over that, dear. Everything will come to you as a matter of course in a very few days.'

But Faith doubted it. Miss Chance was waiting for her—Miss Chance, who looked with almost terror at the grand governess who knew so much and who was capable of instructing Lady Ludlow's daughters.

Faith would not even wait for tea. She went straight away with her old governess. The moment

they found themselves in a hansom together Faith took her hand, squeezed it, and said, 'Oh Chancy darling, I don't know how I shall live through it!'

'My dear, they all seem very grand,' said Miss Chance. 'But surely you like it, don't you, Faith?'

'It seems to me,' said Faith with a dubious smile, 'that more frocks have been ordered for me than any one girl could wear out in the course of her life: frocks and underwear, evening-frocks, morning-frocks, afternoon-frocks, jackets, hats, shoes, boots, ties, gloves, even furs. Oh Chancy, I hate it all!'

'Dear little girl, you will soon get used to it.'

'Why do you speak in that tone, Chancy? One would almost suppose you were Miss Price.'

'Indeed, my dear, you compliment me highly when you compare me to that most elegant woman.'

Faith heaved a deep sigh. 'Heigh-ho!' she exclaimed; 'whatever happens, I shall always love you. And now, please, do tell me—have you got that post?'

'Yes, dear, I have. The Rector was most kind, and Mrs Lacey did not hesitate for a moment. I am to begin my duties there next week.'

'And I am to go away the day after to-morrow,' said Faith. 'Don't let's talk of it, please, Chancy, or I shall cry even while we are in the cab.'

They drew up at the Rectory door. Faith paid the fare, and the cab rolled away out of sight.

Miss Chance could not help looking with a certain degree of envy at the young girl. 'When next I see you I shall not know you,' she said.

'Will your eyes be quite blind then, Chancy?'

'Oh my dear, there is nothing the least wrong with my sight; it is only that my eyes are weak. What do you mean?'

'I shall be back with father very, very often. Oh, and I must tell Martin that Aunt Margaret is coming here at nine o'clock to-night!'

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARING TO LEAVE HOME.

THE Rector had requested Faith not to be present during his interview with her aunt. Lady Ludlow, for all her kindness, her somewhat impulsive character, and her many good qualities, was also thoroughly business-like. She came of an ancient family of great wealth and respectability. In her day she had been a great beauty, so also had been Faith's mother.

For reasons which Faith little suspected, there had been a sort of estrangement between the sisters since their marriages. One was the wife of a wealthy baronet, one of the greatest aristocrats in Yorkshire; the other had cast in her lot with Leonard King. She had never regretted her choice; but Lady Ludlow and she now belonged to two separate worlds. They had seldom or never met, and without there being absolutely any coldness between them, the old sisterly intercourse had more or less ceased.

Now the one sister, the darling of her childhood and her early girlhood, was dead; and there was nothing Margaret Ludlow felt too much to do for that sister's only child.

The Rector was a man of prejudices. He was full of common-sense and learning, he was an earnest Christian in every sense of the word, and devoted to his profession; but he did not like the world as it presented itself to him under the guise of Lady Ludlow. Nevertheless, he was determined to put Faith under her care.

He rose now as she entered, and greeted her courteously but coldly. She acknowledged his salutation, and seated herself in the chair which he brought forward for her.

'It is extremely good of you to call,' he said; 'it has saved me a great deal of time. You can understand that the rector of a very large parish has often more to do than he can well get through.'

'I made it a necessity to call on you, Leonard,' replied Lady Ludlow. 'We have several little matters to talk over with regard to Faith.'

'They can be quickly got through, can they not?' said the Rector. 'I wrote a formal acceptance of your offer; I thought it only right to do so for my dear wife's sake.'

Lady Ludlow looked at him out of her brilliant dark eyes. Then she said quietly, 'Nevertheless, I quite agree with your desire to talk with me. Your letter was direct and to the point, but an interview is often more satisfactory than many hours wasted in mere correspondence.'

'Quite so,' said the Rector, looking with some slight impatience at the pages of his next Sunday's sermon which lay scattered on his writing-table.

'I have seen Faith to-day,' said Lady Ludlow.

'Yes—oh yes.'

'I like her. She is at present at the *gauche* age, but by-and-by she may become quite brilliant.'

'In what sense do you mean?' asked the Rector, fixing his deep-set eyes on his visitor. 'I want Faith to be a good woman; I want her to be accomplished in all those things which make for our peace; and, if possible—if such a great gift could be mine once again—I want her to resemble her mother.'

'Yes, yes,' said Lady Ludlow; 'all these things will doubtless happen.'

'With regard to her expenses,' said the Rector, 'there is her mother's fortune, the interest of part

of which is to be spent on her. I will not touch a penny of that money. Faith need not be in the least indebted to you, Lady Ludlow.'

'I think, Leonard, you might call me Margaret.'

The Rector bowed. 'Except for those things which a girl needs — care and motherliness,' he continued. 'She has missed her mother terribly, terribly. I am too busy even to give her the care that an ordinary father might bestow. You will find her, I fear, backward in her education. I will leave all these matters in your hands. I have instructed my lawyers to send you quarterly a sum of money sufficient to give Faith every comfort. I do not wish her, in any sense, to eat the bread of charity.'

'Even if she did live with me for a long time free of expense it could scarcely be called eating the bread of charity,' said Lady Ludlow. 'But,' she added after a pause, seeing the Rector's brow contract into a frown, 'it must be, of course, as you wish, Leonard. How much do you propose to allow the child?'

'One hundred a year—more than enough for any growing girl. The rest of the money will accumulate until she is of age.'

'I think, if my dear sister were alive, she would wish you to use that money, Leonard, to add to your own comforts.'

'You must allow me to do as I think right in that matter, Margaret. And now, there is one more thing. When do you take the child?'

'The day after to-morrow.'

The Rector looked down.

'Quite right,' he said, raising his eyes after a minute. 'When a painful thing has to be done, let it be done quickly. If she is ill you will let me know. If a larger sum is required for her maintenance you will inform me. As to her visits to me, I should like to see her once a year for one week; she

can manage to come to me here, or perhaps I could manage to meet her at the seaside. She is very depressed at present; but she is a good child—faithful, true. I put her into your care, Margaret Ludlow, for three years. When she is eighteen she comes back to me, to take up her position at the head of my establishment.'

'When she is eighteen!' said Lady Ludlow, aghast. 'But at that age a girl only begins her education!'

The Rector rose. 'That is my present resolve,' he said. 'I may, of course, change it. Thank you much. You are lifting a load from my mind; and I am sure her dear mother would be happy if she knew.'

When, on the evening of the following day, the Rector was bidding Faith good-bye he put five sovereigns into her hand. 'You must clearly understand, my dear daughter,' he said, 'that though you are going to your aunt, Lady Ludlow, you are not going on a visit—your expenses will be paid. If more is required you have but to write to me, or your aunt has but to write to me, and the money will be forthcoming. I want you to take every possible advantage of the new life which is opening before you. I will occasionally send you a sum of money equal to that which I am now giving you. I want you, for my sake, and for your dear mother's sake, to be cheerful. It is not good for the young to fret. Remember that, my dear, in your future life. I shall be glad to hear from you about once a month. It is scarcely necessary for you to write oftener.'

Faith was clinging to the tall, thin man. 'But, daddy, Christmas will come soon! I may return to you for Christmas, may I not?'

'Most certainly not. Now, my darling, please don't cry! It upsets me terribly—tears in a woman; in fact, I never could stand them.'

Faith choked back her sobs. Then she said

suddenly, 'Father, you say you are going out very early in the morning. This is practically our good-bye. Is it fair to a girl to treat her as you are treating me?'

'Fair?' said the Rector, pushing Faith a little away from him and almost frowning at her. 'What could be fairer? Surely I deny myself?'

'Oh, do you?' said Faith, trying to smile a little. 'Is it a trial to you, daddy?'

'Of course it is, my darling. I shall miss you very much. But when a right thing has to be done, let it be done quickly, say I. You cannot live on here alone. Your aunt offers you a home, companions, and educational advantages. She is a very rich woman; and I may as well tell you, Faith, that by-and-by you also will be well off. Your mother had a fortune of her own.'

'Daddy, that is the very point! I never could quite tell why there has been such a change in the house since mother went to God, why you have looked so anxious and worried, why so many of the servants have been sent away. Daddy, mother's money ought to be yours; it *is* yours. You shall keep it; you shall spend it. I cannot and will not have it appropriated only to me; the bare thought of it makes me almost mad. Oh daddy, do have pity on me!'

'I do what is right, my child—what is truly correct. Now, do not let us talk on the subject of money again. You cannot turn me from my resolve. If you are ill, or in any sort of trouble, write to me freely. Your aunt will be kind to you; your cousins, I understand, are nice; their governess, from all accounts, is an estimable, conscientious, highly educated woman. You are to have the advantage of masters and mistresses in every department of knowledge which your aunt thinks necessary for your education. You are not to forget, amidst all these worldly advantages, that the world itself is unimportant compared to those greater things which

occupy my life—which occupied your mother's life. I want you to ask your aunt to introduce you to the rector of the parish; and if he suggests that you should help him a little amongst his poor, I trust that you will do so. Now, my dear, be happy. I shall see you in the summer.'

'Oh daddy, not till then? I cannot bear it!'

'You must, love. This is my fixed resolve. Now, good-night—good-night, Faith. God bless you, my daughter!' The shabby, tired-looking man kissed the weeping girl.

Faith went up to her room, where Martin was waiting for her. A bright fire burned in the grate. 'Oh Martin,' said the poor girl, 'why did you light it? I—I asked that it should not be lit.'

'As if I'd let you shiver here the last night at home!' said Martin. 'Come, now, pet—come! There's a wonderful lot of boxes has come for you, and you and me'll be busy packing for the next hour and a half. Don't you fret, my pretty one! The very best thing in the world has happened to you—you're going away from these fogs and this what I call crying land—since the dear missis was took. I'll look after the Rector—that is, when his good works'll allow him to come home. Don't you fret, missie, love! Old Martin'll see to things.'

'And you won't forget me, Martin?' said the girl.

'Forget your mother's child? Never!' said the old servant.

Faith felt comforted. She stole her hand timidly round Martin's neck. The next minute the two—the worn old servant and the fresh young girl—were clasped in each other's embrace.

'You comfort me,' said Faith. 'Martin, I wonder if you could write to me now and then and tell me the real, simple truth about daddy—I mean if he is keeping well? He will never tell me himself, you know that.'

'He'll keep well enough,' said Martin. 'He's the tough sort that don't sink. But I'll tell you the truth fast enough; and I'll see, also, that his victuals is done to his liking—hot soup he shall have, and chops as tender as I can make 'em. Now, then, pretty, don't you fret! Go away with a cheerful mind, and remember that the next best person to your own mother is your own mother's sister.'

'Let us pack,' said Faith; 'let us pack.' She felt she could not endure much more of this sort of talk. Two new trunks of considerable dimensions, and made of the very finest crushed cane, were in the room. There were also a large hat-box, some rugs and a rug-strap, a neat umbrella with a silver handle, and a pretty *en tout cas* for sunshiny days.

There came a timid tap at the door, and before Martin could cross the room Faith sprang to open it. Miss Chance stood without, and Jane was peeping in the background.

'I really felt I must see the finery, my love,' said Miss Chance.

'Oh lor', missie—ef I *might* 'ave a peep?' said Jane.

'Come in, both of you!' cried Faith, her tears giving place to smiles.

They entered the room.

'There now!' said Martin, 'we'll light a few more candles. We'll be wasteful for once. We'll examine everything.'

'It's the sort of sight one doesn't often encounter in our walk of life,' said Miss Chance, seating herself on the side of Faith's bed and looking with intense interest at the parcels.

'Oh, they don't matter,' said Faith.—'Martin, you are extravagant; you have lit six candles!'

'Well, and ef I have?' said Martin with a sniff. 'My young lady don't go away to her rich relatives every day in the week!'

'Oh my,' said Jane, 'if *this* isn't enough to dazzle 'em!'
PAGE 41.

'I never saw such a pile of boxes before in my life,' said Miss Chance. 'Really and truly, Faith, if you are not interested in these good things showered on you by a beneficent Providence you ought to be. Think of that poor young girl in the novel, who went to Canada with hardly a rag to her back!'

But Faith could not recall at this crucial moment the wishy-washy novel.

'Ef you 'ad no objection, miss,' said Jane, 'I could begin to cut the cords o' the boxes. I'm all in a twitter to see w'at 's within.'

'Let us do it in order,' said Miss Chance.—'Jane, cut all the cords and collect the string tidily and put it away. Then Martin and I between us will put the things into the trunks; but I suggest that they are first of all laid in order on the bed.'

The next hour was one of keen excitement. Even Faith forgot to cry, and laughed merrily several times when her furs were exhibited, her stylish black dresses brought out for inspection, and her neat and expensive underwear seen.

'I never, never did!' exclaimed Jane at short, gasping intervals. 'It seems sort o' wrong to wear anything so spider-like an' delicate fine.'

'You know nothing of ladies' apparel, Jane Hudson,' rejoined Martin in a tart voice.

'Oh my,' said Jane, 'if *this* isn't enough to dazzle 'em!' She had lifted from its box a soft evening-dress of billowy white. 'You 'll wear this, miss—an' you in the deepest mournin'?'

Faith's brows contracted.

'In course she 'll wear it,' said Martin.

'Yes, it 's correct,' exclaimed Miss Chance. 'I am told on the best authority that now, in the evenings, young girls, even in as deep black as our beloved Faith, wear white.'

'That bein' so,' said Jane, much relieved, 'our Miss

Faith 'll look like a helegant hangel.—Oh missis, I 'll be a'most 'opin' that the wings 'll sprout!'

After removing Faith's copious outfit from its different receptacles, the next piece of work was to try the different garments on. The colour came into the girl's cheeks, and made her look quite pretty as she slipped one frock on after another.

At last, however, the serious business of packing had to commence. Jane was less useful with regard to packing, and by Martin's advice, took herself off to bed.

'For you 'll have to be stirring early in the morning, Jane,' said Martin.—'And now, missie, you 'll set yourself down by the fire, and Miss Chance and me 'll pack your things.'

Faith had collected a few of her special treasures—her mother's Bible, her mother's little old-fashioned work-box, her mother's writing-case, a few childish books which her mother had given her. They lay at the bottom of one of the trunks. Then in went the finery—nothing forgotten, everything in perfect order; and Faith's travelling-dress, with its neat hat and warm jacket and dark-gray fur, were put into the wardrobe, ready to be donned in good time on the following morning.

'There, now, that 's finished!' said Martin.

'I will write to you, dear,' said Miss Chance, 'and I hope you will write to me now and then; and if I can help you in any small way, Faith, I shall be only too delighted. I know, my love, that I do not consider myself a highly educated woman; but I am an excellent speller. Now, if you write to me and make some little mistakes in orthography, and would allow me the great pleasure of correcting your letters and sending them back to you, it would give me immense satisfaction.'

'Oh Chancy, how perfectly sweet of you! I know I shall spell badly.'

'No, dear, I am sure you won't. Bad spelling, in my opinion, is due to pure nervousness. If you spell a word quickly, without thinking about it, you as a rule get it right; but the moment you think, somehow or other you make a mistake. Let me still be your governess as regards your orthography, Faith.'

'I shall be only too delighted,' said Faith.—'There, now,' she added, looking at Martin, 'you have both cheered me up wonderfully! I felt miserable a short time ago, but now I am better.'

'You wait a bit, missie,' said Martin, 'and you'll be better still.' She whisked out of the room.

Faith turned to Miss Chance. 'Chancy,' she said, 'I wonder if you will ever see father?'

'In church on Sunday, dear. I shall make it a point of never missing church. I shall see his noble face every Sunday morning and, if possible, every Sunday evening. Sometimes, it is true, I have to go on Sunday afternoons to visit a friend who is lame, and who lives in the country; but I shall not go oftener than I can help. I shall be able to tell you about your father, and also about his sermons. I see you are fretting at leaving him.'

'I am! I am!'

'You mustn't fret too much, dear child. It will make him happy to know that you are happy. Even from my distant pew I'll be able to ascertain whether his face looks more worn by your absence; and you know Martin is an excellent servant, and will take the best care of him.'

Just at that moment Martin reappeared. She was bringing in a tray with some cups of hot cocoa, sweet cake, and piles of bread-and-butter. 'Now, miss,' she said, 'will you and Miss Faith have a cosy meal together?—I will say good-night to you, my pet; for, after you've taken your cocoa, you ought to get off to bed. I'll be calling you bright and early in the morning.'

CHAPTER V.

GOOD-BYE.

THE sun shone in again through Faith's windows. She had slept without dreaming all night, and wondered for a minute what was happening when Martin, bearing a cup of hot tea in her hand, stood by the girl.

'You 've got to get up, missie; and be brisk about it, or you 'll never be at King's Cross in time for that grand Lady Ludlow.'

'Oh!' said Faith; and her heart, which had risen brightly to meet the new day, sank low in her breast.

'Your father 's out and away, and has left you his love; and now all you has to do is to get dressed. Miss Chance is going with you to King's Cross; I think she is downstairs already. She 's a good 'un, is Miss Chance. It 's a pity the Lord didn't see fit to have her eddicated.'

'I love her dearly,' said Faith, 'and I love you dearly. I am going away from all those I love!'

'Come, come!' said Martin in her briskest voice; 'no moping now. Jump out of bed and get dressed as fast as you can. You can mope in the train if you like, and I 'll mope in the house after you 're gone; but whilst you 're here with us there 'll be no moping allowed.'

So Faith got up briskly, stimulated by the kind servant's words. She put on her new, smart, stylishly made black frock, her new black stockings with their shining 'clocks,' and her little patent-leather shoes. A jacket, very smartly made, but quite girlish, surmounted the frock; and there was a hat perfectly

simple in style, and yet with a distinguished look about it, which crowned the head of soft fair hair.

Faith looked round her room. Her trunks were already removed, her rugs were strapped, her hat-box had vanished. For one wild minute she flung herself on her knees by her bedside. 'God, help me to be a good girl and never to forget mother!' she prayed. Then she ran downstairs.

Miss Chance was there. Certainly Miss Chance had very weak eyes that morning; but she managed to control herself, and insisted on Faith eating an excellent breakfast.

Then the cab came to the door. Faith's luggage was put on the top. Martin kissed her. Jane stood in the background and shed tear after tear. Faith felt a hard lump in her throat.

Miss Chance got first into the cab.

Faith followed. 'Good-bye!—good-bye!' she said. She stretched out her hand. It was grasped by the horny hand of Martin. Jane snivelled in the background. The cabman whipped up his horse, and the next minute the old Rectory and the old life had vanished from Faith King's horizon.

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE AT HAREDALE.

A WEEK after the events related in the last chapter Faith King began to wonder whether she had ever really lived in smoky, dusty London. She was the sort of girl who quickly accustoms herself to her surroundings. At Haredale all was fresh and crisp and beautiful. The weather, it is true, was cold; but what did that matter when the sun shone day after day out of a cloudless sky, when the lawns were crisp with hoar-frost, and when the house itself was beautifully warmed from cellar to attic?

The Ludlows were very rich people, and no money was spared to make the house elegant and beautiful in every sense of the word. There was a whole wing appropriated to the young people. It was called the Children's Wing, but was a great deal larger than the requirements of even five young girls demanded. There had been a time when Lady Ludlow had taken immense pains in the furnishing of this wing. Everything suitable for childhood that she could lay her hands on was imported to it—the best pictures for children, the nicest and best books; each room had its soft carpet, its pretty fireplace, its daintily decorated windows.

It was in this wing that Faith slept. Jacqueline's room was next hers, and Diana slept at the other side. Gerty and Patty, as the two younger girls were generally called, slept together in the wonderful old nursery, with its painted tiles telling the story of many a nursery rhyme.

Gerty and Patty were aged respectively ten and

eight years. They were pretty, bright little girls; and although they entered the schoolroom every day to receive instruction from Miss Price, they spent the greater part of their time with Goody, as they called their old nurse.

Goody was a very grand sort of servant indeed. She invariably dressed in black silk—soft black silk which did not rustle—and she wore neat caps of delicate lawn on her head. But her features reminded Faith, in some far-off way, of Martin's face; and on the night that the child arrived at Haredale, when Goody came in to see that the strange young lady had every comfort, she found Faith looking at her with her eyes full of tears.

'Now, whatever is the matter, Miss Faith?'

'If only you would kiss me!' said Faith. 'I am very lonely, and you remind me of Martin.'

'To be sure I will kiss you, my pet!' said Goody, 'and tuck you up and cuddle you. And now, listen to me. If ever you're a bit lonesome, and find the elder young ladies and Miss Price too much for you (not that I expect they will be so), you come and have a game in the nursery with dear little Gerty and Patty. We're always very cosy in the nursery, and we have rightdown cheerful days.'

'Oh, I will! That'll be delightful!' said Faith.

She did not acknowledge it to any one—not even to Martin when she wrote to her, nor to Miss Chance; but Goody's kiss was one of her brightest welcomes to Haredale. Now she was accustomed to her neat room; to the beautiful, happy schoolroom; to her pretty, stylish dresses; to the orderly, regular, and yet—in a sense—strenuous life. Miss Price was not demonstrative, but she was exceedingly kind. Faith's education, up to the time of her mother's death, had been carefully attended to; and it did not require a great deal of extra teaching to bring her up to the same standard of excellence that Miss Price

considered Diana and Jacqueline to have attained. There were masters for music, masters for painting, masters for dancing—in short, masters for every sort of accomplishment. Faith had her own pony, and began to take lessons in riding. Each day the colour grew brighter in her pale little face, and the memory of the dull old days vanished.

Yes, beyond doubt, they were dull old days. There was nothing of importance really forgotten. The mother who had died and left her was ever the foremost thought in Faith's heart; but she remembered her father, and Martin, and Jane, and even kind Miss Chance as people who belonged to another world. Her spirits rose; her laughter was heard more than once.

'Where are you, Faith?' said Jacqueline, running to meet her cousin on a certain sunshiny afternoon towards the end of November.

Faith quickened her steps on hearing Jacqueline's cheerful tone. 'I am here,' she said.

'I've got the most delightful news! Mother has consented, as I knew she would; and the Rosses and MacMahons are coming to us just a week before Christmas. Now, I am going to tell you all about them.'

'Please do,' said Faith.

'You don't look a bit excited, Faithy. You ought to be. I can assure you that Diana and I are.'

'Well, Jacky, you see I am quite different. I have all my life been accustomed to be just one girl at home, and now there are four of you besides me; and, somehow, I can't feel excited about additional girls I have never seen.'

'You will love them—more particularly Kathleen MacMahon. She is a real imp, you know; she is Irish of the Irish. All the MacMahons are Irish; that's what makes them all such splendid fun. Kathleen would make any living creature laugh—and so, for

that matter, would Nora, her sister. But Kathleen's more fun than Nora; she is more daring, she is always in hot water. Don't you love people who are in hot water?'

'I?' said Faith. 'No, I don't think I do. I don't quite know what it means.'

'Oh, it means being desperately naughty,' said Jacqueline. 'We're good here, on the whole; we can't help it, somehow. I am the only one who has any spice in me, and even my spice won't come to the surface when I see darling Pricy vexed. But Pricy's going away for Christmas, and we shall have the place quite to ourselves. I tell you what it is, Faith; we'll have a downright glorious time—no end of larks. Catch Kathleen sitting with her hands before her! And whatever Kathleen does, Nora follows. Nora's very good fun alone, but with Kathleen she's just a sort of magnificent echo.'

'There are two MacMahons, then?' said Faith.

'Yes, two. Now, I must tell you about the Rosses. They are very nice too, only quite different. They're about as English as the MacMahons are Irish. There's Sophy—she is your age. She's very prim and easily frightened. Kathleen can take rise after rise out of Sophy. Sophy is so painfully innocent she believes every single thing you say to her. Then there's Hilda, and there's Maud. Oh, we shall have a magnificent time! Let's count up how many girls there'll be altogether in the house.'

Jacqueline made a quick calculation. 'Five of ourselves,' she said—'of course Gerty and Patty don't quite count, but they can count when necessary—and five strange girls; not that they're strange to us, but of course they'll be strange to you. That'll be ten in all. Then, of course, there'll be other visitors in the house; father and mother like to pack the house brimful for Christmas. But mother has promised us we may have our play or charade. I think a

charade would be best—or a succession of charades—because we can say the things we like on the spur of the moment, and not be tied down to the words of the play. Mother says we are to have it in the hall; and the servants are to come and see it, and all the visitors as well. It will be a very important kind of thing, and mother says that any dresses we want we can write to Nathan's for.'

'Who's Nathan?' asked Faith.

'Oh, a theatrical sort of costumier. He will send us down piles of things from London. I wonder, Faith, if you can act?'

'I am sure I can't,' said Faith.

'Well, we'll see. You will do in chorus, anyway; you've got such a pretty voice, and we're certain to have some of our charades partly musical. But nothing can be really arranged until Kathleen comes. We call her Queen of the Revels, she is really magnificent.'

'Do you think I'll be afraid of her?' asked Faith.

'You?' said Jacqueline. 'Well, somehow, I don't think you'd be afraid of anybody.'

'I don't know,' said Faith. 'I love *you*, Jacky; but I don't feel, somehow, that I get on very well with Diana.'

'Oh, but why do you say that?' asked Jacqueline, looking perplexed and slightly annoyed.

'Well, she isn't so open and sweet to me as you are. Oh, of course I don't blame her in the very least. Why should she be? I have come as a stranger to live here.'

'You are our first cousin, you are no stranger,' said Jacqueline in her affectionate way.

'Diana treats me as a stranger, nevertheless,' said Faith.

'You mustn't take any notice of that. She has got that cold sort of way, but she doesn't mean it. I am sure she likes you awfully, Faith.'

'Do you think so? Do you say that because—because you wish to please me, or because it is true?'

Jacqueline coloured very slightly. 'Well, anyhow,' she said after a pause, 'if she doesn't like you tremendously just now she will in no time at all. If I can't make her like you, Kathleen will. Wait till you see Kathleen. Oh, she is the core of my heart—she is the darling of my eyes! But let me whisper to you, Faith—she *is* a rare naughty one!'

Faith made no reply. The two girls presently went back to the house. The short winter day had come to a close, but within it was warm and cosy. There were bright fires burning everywhere, and, in addition, there was a great furnace below the house which warmed the passages and made the general atmosphere almost like summer.

Faith and Jacqueline parted outside each other's doors. Faith went slowly into her room; and Jacqueline, after flinging off her hat and combing out her mass of thick, black, curly hair, sought her sister's room.

Diana was standing by the glass. She turned slightly when Jacqueline approached. 'I saw you out in the grounds with Faith King,' she said.

'Well, of course I was,' said Jacqueline. 'Dear little Faith!'

'I don't see why you should give me up for her,' said Diana.

'Oh Di, you are not jealous of that dear little lonely creature!'

'No, she isn't worth being jealous about,' said Diana. 'But I wish, all the same, she hadn't come.'

'That's very unkind,' said Jacqueline. 'Mother said she had to come. And then you quite understand, Di, that she doesn't in any sense live on father and mother; she has her own money.'

'As if I cared about that,' said Diana. 'I would

almost rather she lived on father's bounty; then I might take it out of her. As it is, I can do nothing.'

'I wish you really did care for her, Di.'

'Well, I don't,' said Diana bluntly. 'She is such a mousy-mousy sort of person, and takes everything as a right. Mother didn't mean to tell me—but she has evidently lived in a very different style before she came here. If she was open and jolly and—and grateful, I might put up with her; but as it is'——

'Di, I want to say something to you.'

'Well, what is it, Jacky? You are always what I may call pretty open in your remarks.'

'Poor little Faith notices that you don't like her.'

Diana stood quite still for a minute. She had a fair, beautiful, statuesque face. Her blue eyes brightened a trifle. 'Do you know,' she said, 'that I never gave Faith credit for so much perception?'

'It is true, then?' said Jacqueline.

'Alas, Jacky, it is true that I don't like her!'

Jacqueline gave a vexed exclamation. 'You 'll have to put up with her, all the same.'

'Oh dear, yes!' said Diana. 'I am not going to worry the child. You and she are good friends; only try to keep a corner in your heart for me. You 're always rushing away with her, and that, of course, doesn't encourage my feelings of goodwill. However, you may be quite certain that I, Diana Ludlow, will not do anything beneath my dignity. She doesn't suit me, and that 's plain.'

'Let 's talk of something else,' said Jacqueline. 'You know, of course, that the MacMahons and the Rosses are coming?'

'Yes, I am glad of that. I am fond of Sophy Ross.'

'Oh Sophy!' exclaimed Jacqueline. 'The one to be really admired is Kathleen.'

'Of course I admire Kathleen,' replied Diana. 'She 'll be great fun. I shouldn't be the least sur-

prised if she agrees with me with regard to that dull little Faith.'

'Di, that's the very thing I want to say to you! I do want most earnestly—— Di, do listen!'

'Listen to what?' said Diana, her cold blue eyes fixed indignantly on her sister's face.

'I want you to promise not to set Kathleen against Faith. Kathleen is so clever and understanding, and she—she can just bring Faith out.'

'Yes, of course,' said Diana, 'and turn Faith into a sort of heroine and put me altogether into the background. Thank you, Jacky; but I shall certainly not make you the promise you demand. Now, the tea-gong has sounded; let's get into the schoolroom.'

Diana never gave herself away. She had a knack of always looking supremely elegant, reserved, and beautiful. When she spoke people invariably listened to her. But she was not hearty and jolly and laughing and witty, as Jacqueline was. Even Miss Price found Diana a trial at times; and as to Faith—try as she would, she could not get over the impression that her eldest cousin did not like her.

The girl, however, was really quite happy in herself, and was not going to be put out over a comparatively small circumstance. There was work to be done, there were books to be read, there was music to be practised, there were pictures to be painted, there were riding-lessons, there were walks, and there was always a delightful, exciting time in the evening when the girls put on their very best frocks and came down to the drawing-room for about an hour before they retired for the night. Faith had begun her sojourn at Haredale by frankly hating this hour; but when she found that Diana and Jacqueline loved it and looked forward to it, she began gradually but surely to share in their pleasure. It was the one time in the twenty-four hours when each individual girl was expected to look her very best—when her

choicest dress was donned, her hair arranged in the most becoming style, and her *tout ensemble* made as graceful and charming as possible.

The Ludlows were people who seldom or never had their house empty; and the girls had to run the gauntlet of innumerable visitors as they stole softly into the drawing-room and sat down, pretending to read some handsome books that lay about until they were spoken to. It so happened, however, that Jacqueline was a universal favourite with every one; she was so merry, so sprightly, that one great lady after the other asked her to sit by her side and talk to her and make her laugh. Diana was noticed much less than her sister—not that this fact troubled the young girl—and Faith was left altogether in the cold.

On this very evening, however, as Faith was having her dress changed by Goody, who took it upon herself to arrange Miss Faith's evening toilet night after night, Jacqueline suddenly burst into the room. 'No, Faith, you mustn't wear your black to-night,' she said. 'That fluffy white net must be put on. You can have a bow of black ribbon if you like, but you will look best in simple white.'

Now, Faith could not bear to wear her white dresses, and invariably clung to the black ones, which she regarded as the correct costumes for her to appear in at that time. Jacqueline's coaxing eyes, however, and still more coaxing voice, overpersuaded her; and the young girl, looking very elegant and remarkably pretty, went downstairs, accompanied by both her cousins.

Diana was in the palest, softest blue, which exactly suited her eyes and complexion. Jacqueline wore a white dress, something like Faith's. Jacqueline would always be remarked in any company by her vivacity, her sparkling eyes, her ready wit. But Faith was already beginning to acquire a dignity of her own; she was tall and remarkably well made

for so young a girl, she held her head well on a pair of somewhat massive shoulders, her quantities of light hair flowed becomingly down her back, her large dark eyes were wide open, and she had a bright colour in her cheeks.

The ladies had returned to the drawing-room after dinner, and Lady Ludlow was seated on a sofa near the fire beside a remarkably gracious-looking woman of the name of Mrs Mortimer.

Mrs Mortimer had been a beauty in her day, and she still bore that regal beauty which old age can rightly earn when it is the end of a well-spent life. Her hair was white as silver, her dress was black velvet, she wore a little cap of cobwebby lace on her fine old head, and her eyes (still dark and soft as velvet) looked with an interested expression around her. 'My dear Margaret,' she said, glancing at the three girls, 'I didn't know that you had so many daughters just merging into womanhood.'

Lady Ludlow laughed. 'Nor have I, Mrs Mortimer,' she replied. 'Diana, the fair girl in blue, is my eldest. Then comes my darling Jacky, whom of course you know all about.'

'That little, dark, sprightly creature?' said Mrs Mortimer.

'Yes, she is quite the life of the house.'

'But there's a third girl,' said Mrs Mortimer.

'Ah yes—Faith, dear Faith! She is the daughter of my sister—my dearest sister—who died not long ago. Her name is Faith King.'

'What! your sister Faith? How well I remember her! And so she is her child? Please, Lady Ludlow, introduce me at once.'

'Faith, come here, dear!' said Lady Ludlow.

Faith advanced.

Mrs Mortimer held out her hand. 'I knew your mother, my child,' she said, 'and should like to have a little talk with you.'

Faith's eyes sparkled with delight. The colour deepened in her cheeks. Her beauty was now quite pronounced. Diana gave her a jealous, angry glance. Lady Ludlow went away to entertain another guest; and Faith, at Mrs Mortimer's invitation, dropped down on the sofa by her side. In a very few minutes the old lady and the girl were talking as though they had known each other for years. Faith found all her shyness vanishing.

Mrs Mortimer described a part of Mrs King's life which had hitherto been unrevealed to her only child—the time when she was as young as Faith herself. 'You have a look of her, dear, although you are not quite like her; I suppose you partly take after your father, but you have a look of her. She was one of my very dearest young friends.'

Faith gave a sort of gasp.

'You must tell me all about her, Faith,' continued the old lady. 'She was one of those whom I could never forget. She lived a sacred and charmed life. I have not known any one in all my experience who, without making any fuss about the matter, lived so close to God.'

Faith, who had been very much excited at first at seeing her mother's old friend, now felt a lump rising in her throat. 'Mrs Mortimer'—— she said suddenly.

'Yes, my love?'

'It is only a little over three months since my darling mother went to God.'

'Dear child, yes; but doubtless it seems like long and beautiful years to her in the heavenly mansions.'

'Only, perhaps you 'll understand,' continued Faith, 'that it hurts me to talk about her before—before so many people.'

'I understand perfectly. I am going to stay here for some little time. For your mother's sake, and also because I think I shall like you for yourself, I

hope we may be friends. I am a very old woman, and I am given the privilege of the aged. Lady Ludlow always gives me my tea in my own room in order, as she says, that I may be sufficiently rested to appear at dinner. Will you join me at tea in my room to-morrow afternoon?'

'If Aunt Margaret allows me, Mrs Mortimer.'

'I will ask her, dear.—Margaret!'

Lady Ludlow approached. 'Now, dear Mrs Mortimer,' she said, 'you must not tire yourself!'

'I have been refreshed, on the contrary, by my talk with this dear young girl. I want your permission to allow Faith to have tea with me to-morrow in my private sitting-room.'

'Certainly,' said Lady Ludlow.—'Faith, will you tell Miss Price, if I am too busy to see her, that you have my permission to have tea with Mrs Mortimer? One of the servants will take you to her room, dear. She has tea at four o'clock.'

'Oh, thank you! thank you, Aunt Margaret!' said Faith, her eyes beaming. 'I shall be delighted!'

A minute later she went back to her cousins.

'Sit between us, do,' said Jacqueline. 'I can tell you you were honoured by Mrs Mortimer taking notice of you. She is a dear old soul, and one of the very grandest people in the county; but she hardly ever speaks to *us*. What did she say to you, Faith?'

'I don't suppose it was anything profoundly interesting,' remarked Diana.

'Oh, but it was!' said Faith, who was carried out of herself and forgot her cousin's dislike for the time being. 'Mrs Mortimer knew mother very, very well, and you can imagine what a tie that was to me; and she has asked me to have tea with her to-morrow in her own room, and Aunt Margaret has given permission.—Why, what is the matter, Di?'

'Nothing,' said Diana. 'I am tired; I shall go to

bed.' Diana bade good-night, and presently left the room.

The other girls followed in a few minutes.

Diana went straight up to her own bedroom. There, contrary to her usual custom, she turned the key in the lock. Having done this, and arranged the electric light to her satisfaction, she proceeded to write a letter. This letter was addressed to Kathleen MacMahon:

'Dear Kathleen,—I am truly glad you and Nora will be with us for Christmas. I am sure we shall have no end of fun; and I do sincerely trust you will help me to put an odious, conceited girl into her right place. I allude to a cousin of ours. She is the daughter of mother's sister, who died quite lately. We never knew Aunt Faith, but for a short time were expected to go into slight mourning for her. We are out of mourning now, however—thank goodness!

'Well, Faith, the only daughter, is landed on us. Oh, she has money! it has nothing whatever to do with that; but she is just, to my mind, *de trop*. Aunt Faith made what we would consider a *mésalliance*, although, of course, there's nothing whatever to be said against her husband; he is a very good man, but not exactly in our set. The fact is, Faith belongs to his set; and it is remarkably trying to have her here. She annoys me inexpressibly; and I hope, my dear, delightful Kathleen, that you will help me, when you come, by putting her in her right place. She is a little monkey, full of airs and graces; these, considering her circumstances, are quite intolerable. Her last feat was to win the affections of Mrs Mortimer—that very rich old lady who has that magnificent place on the borders of Yorkshire, Court Abbey. Why, Mrs Mortimer is a sort of queen wherever she goes; and she just singled out that

stupid Faith for special recognition, and has invited her to tea with her. It is my impression that Mrs Mortimer will remain here until after Christmas, so we must make it our duty to nip that friendship in the bud. I may as well tell you that Jacky is wild about Faith; but then, Jacky is wild about every one.

'Now, keep the contents of this letter to yourself; but ponder over it, and help me when you can.—Your very devoted friend, DIANA LUDLOW.'

Having finished her letter, Diana addressed it, stamped it, took it downstairs, and deposited it in the post-box. On her way up again she came face to face with Faith. Faith's cheeks were still flushed with animation and the pleasure of her brief conversation with Mrs Mortimer.

'Good-night,' said Diana.

'Good-night, Di,' said Faith a little timidly for her. 'Are you angry with me about anything?'

'Angry with you?' replied Diana. 'Oh dear, no; it wouldn't be worth while.'

Faith went to her own room. 'I must try and win Diana,' she thought. 'Perhaps I can tell Mrs Mortimer about her. One must have trials wherever one goes; and I am happy here—yes, I am, notwithstanding the fact that I am away from my dear daddy, and from Martin and Chancy, and the old life. Yes, I am happy; and now that I can talk to Mrs Mortimer about mother as she used to be I shall scarcely know how to contain myself.'

The next morning, at schoolroom breakfast, Jacqueline said in her clear, bright voice, 'Dear Miss Price, do guess whom the King delighteth to honour?'

'This is no time for riddles, Jacqueline,' replied Miss Price.

'And I do wish you would not talk utter nonsense,' remarked Diana.

'I'll always be myself,' said Jacqueline. 'The

King, in the present instance, is no less a person than Mrs Mortimer; and the one whom the King delighteth to honour is our darling little Faith.'

'Really!' said Miss Price, raising her brows in some amazement.—'You are lucky, Faith.'

'Yes, I am,' said Faith. 'I don't know anything whatever about Mrs Mortimer, nor why you call a sweet, beautiful old lady the King. But she was exceedingly kind to me last night, just and entirely because she knew mother when mother was a girl.'

'You don't quite realise, dear, perhaps,' said Miss Price, 'that there are few people in the length and breadth of England who would not be proud to be spoken to in a friendly way by Mrs Mortimer of Court Abbey. She is one of the most lovable and delightful of women. She is the owner of great wealth, which she spends for the good of all those with whom she comes in contact. She is, however, singularly reserved, except amongst her very old friends, and does not now, in her old age, make new ones. I am glad she likes you, Faith; it is a great honour to you.'

'It's because of mother,' said the girl; 'and,' she continued, 'I like her for it on account of mother.' Faith lowered her eyes as she spoke. She felt very nearly breaking down.

Diana was helping herself to some cold pigeon-pie.

Jacqueline continued to speak eagerly. 'I always said that Faith would be a favourite,' she remarked. 'I knew it from the moment I saw her; I felt it in my bones.—Miss Price, darling, do you ever feel things in your bones?'

'Rheumatism, at times, my love.'

'Oh, but it's nothing of that sort with regard to our Faith. Anyhow, Mrs Mortimer does like her for herself, although Faith is so modest she won't admit it; and what's more, Mrs Mortimer has invited Faith to have tea with her this afternoon at four o'clock in

her private sitting-room. It's the Rose Room, isn't it, this time, Miss Price?'

'Yes, it is the Rose Room,' replied Miss Price. 'And so Faith is to have tea alone with Mrs Mortimer?'

'She did ask me,' said Faith, raising her dark eyes, 'and Aunt Margaret said I might go.'

'Of course you may go, my dear; and I trust you will consider it a very great honour indeed, for Mrs Mortimer's friendship is worth having. This privilege ought to make you work extra well to-day, Faith.'

'It will—it will! I am delighted about it!' said Faith. But just at that moment her eyes met those of her Cousin Diana, and her spirits, which had risen high at the thought of the pleasure before her, fell considerably.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAT WITH A DEAR OLD LADY.

NO one had ever considered Diana Ludlow a specially ill-natured girl until Faith appeared on the scene. She was not bright and winsome and fascinating like Jacqueline; but she was conscientious, pretty to look at, lady-like, and careful to go through her studies with attention.

She was not a particularly clever girl, neither was she the reverse. She might make a sensation in society by-and-by, for her beauty was of a distinct and statuesque type; but she was wanting in the warmth and vitality which made Jacqueline so charming. No one dreamed, however, of disliking Diana. People said of her that she was a little hard to get at—a little reserved, but doubtless on that account all the better worth thinking about. She was the eldest Miss Ludlow too; and her position as the daughter of her father and mother gave her the *entrée* into all the society in which she was as yet allowed to mingle.

Faith's arrival, however, brought out a completely new side to Diana's character. The cold girl found that she could be intensely jealous. In reality, without being able to show it (for she was one of those people who always keep their affections carefully to themselves), she adored Jacqueline; and now Jacqueline was taken up with Faith. It was Faith this, Faith that. Jacqueline was always talking with Faith, or about her; and Diana, at first only languidly annoyed, soon became more actively so. Her indifference to her cousin grew into dislike, and now the fact that Mrs Mortimer (who had never taken the slightest

notice of her, Diana) chose to single out Faith as a special favourite brought her dislike to a climax.

Diana was not specially clever; but she greatly hoped that Kathleen, who was, would help her to upset the favourite's place in the household. It was too absurd that the daughter of a poor London Rector should have privileges which were denied to Diana Ludlow, the eldest daughter of Sir Jasper Ludlow of Haredale! All the young lady's hitherto subdued pride of rank and position now came to the fore, and there was no small thing she would not do to show her spite to Faith.

At first, however, this spite was not so apparent as to render Faith King materially unhappy. She spent a delightful afternoon with Mrs Mortimer, who made her sit by the fire in her cosy room, allowed her to pour out tea, and told her without reserve that in the gloaming she could almost imagine herself back twenty years, when another Faith poured out tea for her and was her special favourite.

'Your mother was one of the sweetest girls I ever came across,' said the old lady. 'There was a time when I hoped against hope that she might be very near and dear to me. But that time went by; I will not tell you about it now. She married your father and was happy.'

'Oh yes,' said Faith, 'I never saw mother unhappy. She always had the sweetest, brightest face. She made home so delightful. She kept father so peaceful, she understood him so thoroughly; there was nothing she would not do for him. Ah, it was very different when she died!' Suddenly, poor little Faith burst into tears. 'I don't want to hurt you, Mrs Mortimer,' she continued. 'They all tell me it is very, very kind of you to notice a little girl like me, and I know it is; but you have talked of mother as no one else has talked of her since her death. Even my father could not speak of her; it was too much

for him. I was very sorry at first when I learnt that I was to come here, and I will tell you why.'

'Yes, dear, tell me. Don't mind crying, Faith; tears are quite natural when we think of those we love—those we cannot see until we pass behind the veil.'

'I used to go to the cemetery once a week,' said Faith, hastily smothering back her sobs, 'and lay a few flowers on her grave; it was a kind of comfort. Now there 'll be no one to do it.'

Mrs Mortimer thought for a minute. 'I have a beautiful garden at home,' she said, 'and lovely flowers —flowers which come on in relays all the year round. How would you like me to make you a little present, Faith?'

'I don't understand,' said Faith.

'It wouldn't be quite the same, of course,' said Mrs Mortimer, 'but it would be something. I would get my gardener to send, once a week, a cross of flowers from my garden to be placed on your mother's grave. It could go straight to the person who has charge of the cemetery, and there would be a little card fastened to it with the words, "From Faith." Wouldn't that be better than nothing, my darling child?'

'Oh, it would be lovely!' said Faith. 'Thank you—thank you!' She forgot her reserve; she forgot that the old lady was stately, and that most people were afraid of her. She put her arms gently round her neck, and kissed Mrs Mortimer's faded cheek. 'I love you!' she said. 'I don't love many people, but I love you!'

'We will arrange that little matter, Faith,' said Mrs Mortimer. 'And now, you will promise to be happy with your cousins. You *are* happy, are you not?'

'Quite—with Jacqueline.'

'You cannot expect every one to understand you, my dearest child. You have been brought up

differently from the Ludlows. You have been thrown in contact with the stress and strain and strenuous life of a great parish. You cannot expect girls who have always lived in the country to be quite in sympathy with you.'

'Jacqueline is. I love Jacqueline.'

'I want you to love them both. And remember that Margaret Ludlow is a very fine creature—like your mother, although unlike her. They were two dear sisters, the most beautiful I ever met—heiresses both of them. I will confess to you, Faith, that your mother was my favourite; but that is a little secret you must keep to yourself alone. I intend to stay with Margaret Ludlow until after Christmas; and if at any time you have a little trouble you wish to confide in me you can come to the Rose Room. I am a very old lady, dear; but if I am well enough I will see you, and we will talk over matters together. If I cannot see you, you will quite understand.'

'Indeed I will; and I don't know how to thank you.'

'Thank me, Faith King, by growing up to be as fine a woman as your mother was in her time.'

'I shall never forget her,' said the girl. 'She will always be my guiding star.'

'I believe it, my child; but remember that in the world you will find crosses. You must be prepared for them. You are in a rich house now, in your father's house things were different. You can doubtless imagine that the rich and great of the earth have their trials as well as the poor?'

'I can quite believe that,' said Faith.

'It is well that you should learn this lesson while you are young, for you will have money of your own some day. Now then, dear, I think I must ask you to leave me. Please look upon me as your special friend while you are here. Do not be disappointed if I do not speak to you every evening. But I shall

think of you, my child, and I already love you for your mother's sake.'

Faith went back to the Children's Wing with her heart full of expectation. It happened to be a wet afternoon. Diana was seated in an easy-chair busily engaged devouring a story-book. Jacqueline was painting a monster parrot for the benefit of Gerty and Patty, who were clinging on to her and exclaiming with delight over the result of her efforts.

'Oh, here you are!' said Jacqueline when Faith entered.

'Don't talk to Faith now,' said Patty. 'Do put bright—very bright—green eyes into my parrot's head! Oh, isn't he gorgeous?'

'I will talk to you presently, Faith,' said Jacqueline, looking up with her bright smile.

Diana pulled her chair more directly in front of the fire. Faith sat down and took up a book; it was not a very interesting one, and she moved across the room to fetch another from the schoolroom bookcase. But although the bookcase was usually left unlocked, Miss Price had taken away the key on this occasion. Faith then sat down with her hands before her. Her face was very bright and her eyes full of thought.

Diana looked up impatiently. 'I wish you would get something to do!' she said. 'It does worry me when you sit like that without doing anything at all!'

'I'd fetch my work, only there isn't enough light,' said Faith.

Diana took no further notice, but turned a leaf of her engrossing book. By-and-by Goody called Gerty and Patty to come back to the nursery; and Jacqueline sprang upon Faith and said in her eager voice, her eyes sparkling, her teeth gleaming, 'Well?'

'I had a delightful time,' said Faith.

'If you're going to talk and go into rhapsodies, I must leave the room,' said Diana.

'Oh Di, do shut up your book and listen! You know we're both dying to hear what Mrs Mortimer said to Faith and what Faith said to her.—Have you won her heart, the dear old darling? Has she promised to be your friend for evermore? It is quite remarkable the fancy she took to you. Tell us everything. Tell us how she looks when she's alone. Tell us how she talks when she isn't the Queen with all her subjects round her.'

'She is just a dear, very dear old lady,' replied Faith. 'She loved my mother, and for my mother's sake she loves me.'

At that moment Diana got up and left the room.

Faith looked after her with a startled expression. 'Now, I've driven her away,' she said. 'I oughtn't to have talked while she was reading.'

'Oh yes, you ought; it's quite absurd yielding to all Diana's whims. I tell you what it is, Faith—you must ride roughshod over her. If you seem the least bit afraid of her she will become downright nasty. I honestly confess to you I don't understand her attitude. She has no right to treat you as she does; and if she contrives to make you wretched I will tell mother—yes, I will!'

'You mustn't—I won't let you,' said Faith. 'Of course there are trials,' she continued; 'there must be trials everywhere. Dear Mrs Mortimer said so. I suppose Diana is my trial.'

'I love her very much,' said Jacqueline; 'but I do honestly hate the way she goes on with you.'

CHAPTER VIII.

DIANA IS JEALOUS.

IN two or three days Diana received a letter in reply to the one she had written to Kathleen MacMahon.

It was short, and ran as follows:

'DEAREST DIANA,—Your letter has puzzled me a good deal. I know I am a wild hoyden and Irish to the backbone, and I am always up to every sort of fun; but what you ask me to do is—well, to say the least of it—not exactly to my taste. Hadn't you better get that sly Sophy Ross to attend to your wishes?—Yours very affectionately, KATHLEEN MACMAHON.'

Diana turned paler than usual after she had read this letter.

Jacqueline happened to be in the room, and, turning to her sister, said, 'Who have you heard from?'

'Only from Kathleen. There's no news in it.'

'I'm very glad Kathleen is coming,' said Jacqueline. 'Oh dear me, Diana! how strange of you to tear up her letter—and into such tiny portions too! The girls will be here now in little less than a week. I do hope we shall have a downright jolly Christmas, and that you will be your old self once more.'

'My old self? I don't know what you mean,' said Diana.

'There go the fragments all over the floor,' said Jacqueline. 'How very funny of you to tear up Kathy's letter!'

'Oh, do leave the letter alone; it wasn't meant for you!' said Diana in a cross voice.

'Whatever's the matter with you, Di? You are so changed. You and I used to be such jolly good friends, and now'——

'Now we're not,' said Diana, fixing her cold blue eyes on her sister's small, glowing face.

'Well, I suppose that is it—we're not; but I can't make out why.'

'You have another friend, you don't want me,' said Diana.

'Oh Di, I didn't think it was in you to be downright selfish! Just because I am kind to dear little Faith! Are you really jealous, Di? Is that what's the matter with you?'

'Perhaps I am, perhaps I'm not,' said Diana. 'Perhaps I've cause to be jealous, perhaps I've no cause. Anyhow, it makes me perfectly sick to hear that girl quoted morning, noon, and night. You all seem to think there's something out of the common about her. Now, I may as well say frankly that I consider her downright commonplace and most uninteresting.'

'She's not that,' said Jacqueline in a low tone.

'Well, I suppose I am at liberty to draw my own conclusions. To me she is uninteresting, more especially when she takes my sister from me.'

'She doesn't take me from you. I love you as much as ever.'

'Nonsense! You know you don't. If you did, you wouldn't be always—morning, noon, and night—with Faith. Even Miss Price, who is so fair in all she says and does, praises up Faith, and says that she's a girl with extraordinary abilities.'

'Well, so she is,' said Jacqueline stoutly. 'She is a remarkably clever girl.'

'I say she isn't!' said Diana, her face growing crimson. 'It's just because she's fresh and you're not accustomed to her that you all make such a fuss about her—Mrs Mortimer and all. It is just too annoying!'

Jacqueline was silent for a minute. No one had ever seen her out of temper. No one had ever yet observed a frown on that radiant, sparkling little face. But it came now—perhaps for the first time. 'I think you are unjust,' she said. 'You make Faith herself unhappy. If we were without our darling mother should we be as bright and cheerful as we are? We have got our mother; Faith has lost hers. I wonder at you, Di, for being so—well, so downright mean and shabby!'

'Oh, call me names if you like!' said Diana; 'but at least let me have my room to myself.'

Jacqueline went away, afraid to say any more on the present occasion. It was certainly true that since Faith had arrived things had not gone quite smoothly at Haredale. Diana was cold and distant. The two younger girls scarcely counted; they spent the greater part of their time in the nursery, only doing a certain amount of lessons with Miss Price. Until Faith arrived, Diana and Jacqueline had been all in all to each other; the bright, fearless, gay Jacqueline had only been a pleasant foil to the stately Diana. But now there had come a third element into the scene. Faith—passionate, warm-hearted, loving, with a greater depth of character than either of her cousins—had completely captivated Jacqueline, who had found in Faith just the very thing she missed in Diana, and who, in spite of herself, could not help giving her love and affection to her lonely young cousin.

On this occasion she ran downstairs and out on to the sunlit terrace. The weather was beautiful—almost like a summer day, although the time of year was December; and old Mrs Mortimer was pacing very slowly up and down, leaning on the arm of her faithful maid Bowden.

As soon as she saw Jacqueline she stopped. 'Bowden,' she said, 'you can go into the house. Miss

Jacqueline will lend me her arm for a few minutes.—Will you not, dear?'

'With the greatest pleasure in the world!' said Jacqueline, her eyes sparkling with delight.

'Thank you, my love. I shall like to be with you.'

Bowden turned into the house.

Mrs Mortimer slipped her old hand inside Jacqueline's strong young arm. 'Is anything the matter?' she said suddenly.

'Yes—and no,' said Jacqueline. 'I am not quite—quite happy.'

'Indeed, my dear! And what can trouble a bright, healthy young girl like you?'

'There's nothing troubling me *about* myself; but Di and Faith don't hit it off, and I don't know what in the world to do.'

Mrs Mortimer looked very grave. 'Is that Diana's fault or Faith's fault?'

A look of distress flitted across Jacqueline's face. 'I am dreadfully afraid it is Di's fault,' she said. 'Faith would love her if she would let her. Faith is very nice—very nice indeed.'

'Yes, dear, she is a sweet girl.'

'I am so glad, Mrs Mortimer, that you like her!'

'I do, Jacky; I like her very much. She is like her mother; she will be a splendid woman by-and-by.'

'Why doesn't Di like her?' said Jacqueline.

'Perhaps, dear Jacqueline, Di's feelings towards Faith are caused by a little bit of jealousy. I can't quite say, of course; but I fear it may be so.'

'Well, it makes me unhappy, and it makes Faith unhappy, and I don't think Di is too happy herself.'

'It behoves you, Jacqueline, to be very careful; to guard both your cousin and your sister, and to give neither of them cause to blame you in any degree for your conduct to either.'

'Of course; only I don't quite see what you mean. I like Faith, and I love being with her.'

'And, of course, you also like and love your dear sister?'

'Di? Of course I love her. But the fact is this, Mrs Mortimer, Di has taken it into her head that I care more for Faith than I do for her.'

'You must make her think the other way round, dear. These things are always happening. Yours is a somewhat difficult position; for there's an old saying—very old and very wise—that two are company and three are trumpery. You must divide your attentions between Diana and Faith. And you might say a word to Faith to explain how things really stand; she is such a nice girl, she will, I am sure, efface herself when it is right for you to be with your sister. But tell me now who are coming for Christmas? I don't mean the old people, I don't mean the house-party; I mean the children's party. I am so very old myself, my love, that I take more interest in the children's party than in any other; I seem, somehow, to be nearer to the children. Perhaps it's the fate of the very aged.'

'Dear Mrs Mortimer,' said Jacqueline, 'all children must love you!'

'Tell me about your young friends, dear.'

'The Rosses are coming.'

'The Rosses? I don't think I know them. Who are they?'

'Three girls,' began Jacqueline at once. 'Sophy—she is a year older than Di; she is sixteen, and will soon be grown-up. To tell the truth, I don't greatly care for her; but she is clever and full of ideas. She has a somewhat cold nature, and perhaps that makes Diana rather fond of her, I can't quite tell. She is fairly good-looking, but not beautiful. She is quite a lady, however. Then there's Hilda, a little younger; and Maud, a little younger again. The three Rosses are what you might call typical English girls.'

The old lady turned and glanced at Jacqueline, her

eyes sparkling with fun. 'And I suppose, Jacqueline,' she said, 'you don't think that you are a typical English girl?'

No, I am sure I'm not,' said Jacqueline. 'I must have Irish or Welsh or French blood in me, somehow; I feel so full of mischief, so up to every sort of lark.'

'The spirit of mischief dances in your eyes, my dear. When I look at you sometimes I feel inclined to call you Puck.'

'I'm not wilfully mischievous, all the same,' said Jacqueline. 'Well, to go on with our guests. The Rosses are coming. I believe their father and mother will be here too, but I am not sure. The people who are important to us are the three girls.'

'You don't seem very much excited about them, dearest.'

'To speak frankly, I am not,' said Jacqueline. 'But Kathleen—oh Mrs Mortimer! Kathleen MacMahon—she is a girl *worth* knowing!'

'Her name sounds Irish.'

'And she *is* Irish. She comes from County Cork. Oh, but she has a bit of the brogue—the darling! and she is just too sweet for anything! Then there is Nora, her sister, who is nearly as nice, but not quite. There'll be ten of us altogether; for darling Miss Price goes away on her holiday, and we're to have the Children's Wing to ourselves. I expect we'll have great fun.'

'I hope you will, dear; and if I can help you, in any way in my power, I will.'

'Well,' said Jacqueline, who seemed drawn out of herself by this unwonted attention on the part of the proud old lady, 'we're perfectly mad to get up charades. That would be a capital idea! We want to have a succession of them on the last night of the year, and father says if we do them really well we shall have the great hall given up to us for the purpose; and of course the visitors — the house

visitors—will look on, and all the servants, and the old women from the almshouses, and the schoolmaster and his wife, and the village nurse, and as many of the children as can be crowded into the hall.'

'What a splendid idea!' said Mrs Mortimer. 'Do you know, when I was a girl I was simply wild about charades?'

'Oh, were you? You could help us if you would.'

'Well, I tell you what I'll do. If you and Diana and Faith are determined to make charades or *tableaux vivants* the principal entertainment, I will send to Court Abbey for some boxes which contain some very wonderful old-fashioned dresses of all kinds.'

'Mrs Mortimer, if you were not quite so old I'd lift you off your feet and hug you!'

'I'd much rather you didn't, my love. I'll get Bowden to write to-day to order the boxes to be sent. They are full of finery which I, in my day, used for the very purpose for which you require it: wigs, old-fashioned brocades, high-heeled shoes, satins, brocaded petticoats, &c.'

'Oh! oh! won't that put Di into a good humour?'

'I hope so, Jacqueline. I hope that Christmas will pass very happily for you all. Notwithstanding your happiness in receiving your young friends, you must, please, remember that there will be one amongst you who will suffer.'

'Who is that?' asked Jacqueline, forgetting Faith for the moment.

'This time last year your Cousin Faith had her mother by her side. They were doubtless very busy at Christmas-time. You must all give her a specially kind thought when this Christmas comes round.'

'Well, at least *I* will,' said Jacqueline. 'Thank you so much, Mrs Mortimer.'

'I have enjoyed my walk and my talk with you, dear. The trunks shall be sent for. Now, I would

like to go in; but will you convey a message from me to Diana?'

'What is it?' asked Jacqueline, feeling a sudden sense of alarm.

'Nothing to frighten you, love. You must believe that an old lady like me has not lived between eighty and ninety years for nothing. I want Diana, if she has nothing better to do, to favour me with her company to tea this afternoon.'

'And you won't say anything about me—nor—nor —Faith?'

'Jacqueline, I have promised.'

'Di will be pleased! You are kind! I do love you! Of course I will give your message.'

Jacqueline fled back to the house, singing gaily like any bird. She entered the schoolroom, where the two other girls were busy over their lessons with Miss Price. Faith was making rapid progress. Her mother's training had enabled her to pick up her cousins' acquirements with remarkable ease. She was reading a portion of history aloud in that full, rich voice of hers which compelled one to listen, and which, unconsciously, was the voice of a girl who might be an orator by-and-by. Jacqueline received a very slight reproof for being late, and sat down to attend to her own work. Diana, yawning as she did so, was engaged over her French grammar; she was preparing a difficult lesson for the time when Miss Price would be ready to attend to her.

By-and-by recess came, and during that short period Jacqueline whispered to Diana with regard to the honour in store for her.

'A wonderful thing happened this morning,' said Jacqueline. 'I went out for a walk on the terrace, and I saw the Queen; and the Queen beckoned me to approach, and she sent Bowden into the house and walked up and down with me. She was—oh, quite too delightful!! And the upshot of it all is that she

wants you to go and have tea with her this afternoon, Di, in her private sitting-room.'

Diana's pale face flushed with gratification. 'You 're sure you haven't made a mistake?' she said. 'You haven't confused me with Faith?'

'No, indeed I haven't. She said "Diana," and she said "four o'clock." Of course you will go?'

'Yes, I shall be glad of the opportunity,' said Diana, speaking gravely.

Punctual to the minute, Diana knocked at Mrs Mortimer's door. To be invited to partake of tea with Mrs Mortimer was an honour indeed. Diana had taken care to put on a very becoming dress of white serge, which exactly suited her fair complexion and her statuesque style of face. Mrs Mortimer was seated in front of her elegant tea-equipage. She never had more than one guest at a time, but she almost invariably dispensed this small hospitality herself.

'Sit down, Diana,' she said. 'I am so glad you are able to come.'

'Thank you, Mrs Mortimer. It was kind of you to ask me.' She felt a little shy. This house was her father's and mother's, and yet in Mrs Mortimer's room she felt that she had nothing whatever to do with it. The room was part and parcel of some one else—some one greater than Diana. She looked at the old lady, her hard blue eyes softening, and the expression on her young face becoming less tense.

'How do you like your tea, my love? Sugar or no sugar? Milk or cream? Much or little?'

Diana explained how she preferred her tea, and a cup was presented to her; she was then given a morsel of buttered toast. She felt a choking sensation in her throat, her usual healthy appetite deserted her. There flared before her mind's eye the letter she had received that morning—Kathleen MacMahon's cold refusal to assist her in mortifying Faith,

Kathleen's suggestion that Sophy Ross should do her dirty work for her. Diana looked down at her very white hands and wondered why she had ever thought for a single moment of committing shabby, insulting deeds upon any one. Then she looked up at the old lady, who, having finished her tea, had fixed her eyes on her young visitor's face.

'Another cup, my love?'

'No, thank you, Mrs Mortimer.'

'Will you push the tea-things aside and draw your chair near mine? I want to have a little talk with you.'

'It's coming!' thought Diana. 'She means to scold me about Faith. Well, perhaps I can open her eyes to the enormity of that young person's ways.'

But when the tea-things were put into a corner, and Diana's comfortable chair was moved near to the old lady, and one of Diana's little white hands suddenly found itself reposing in the old hand of Mrs Mortimer, no allusion whatever was made to Faith.

'I had a walk this morning with your sister,' began the old lady. 'What a pretty girl Jacqueline is!—not quite so handsome as you, Diana, but still most charming. I don't want, my dear, to praise your looks—although, of course, good looks are a gift from God Almighty, and ought to be used, like any other talent, for His glory.'

Diana was so pleased at being called good-looking that she forgot the little lecture which surrounded the words.

'And now I want to tell you,' continued Mrs Mortimer, 'that I, as a very old woman, should greatly like you, Diana, to be my confidante during the Christmas season which is so near.'

'Your confidante, dear Mrs Mortimer! Of course, I should be only too proud!'

'It is like this, my love. I am very old'——

'Oh no'—— began Diana.

'Eighty-six my last birthday, dear; a great age—a great, and I trust an honourable age. The old have their privileges, Diana; and mine is this—I want to be associated with you young people during the Christmas season.'

'I am sure we should all be proud,' said Diana.

'But being very old and—and, in a measure, frail, as is to be expected at my years—I cannot stand the bustle and excitement which will naturally fall to your share; but it would give me great pleasure to be, as it were, the children's guide during the Christmas season.'

Diana thought for a brief moment of Sophy, of Faith, of Kathleen, and of Jacqueline. 'Our guide!' she said. 'How?'

'Jacky told me this morning that you are going to get up charades.'

'Yes, we thought of that,' said Diana, her eyes sparkling; 'and *tableaux vivants* also.'

'It is an excellent notion. And now I mean to help in a very practical way. When I was young I always had a sort of play or charade ready each Christmas Day to amuse my dear parents, and I had for the purpose all sorts of quaint dresses, wigs, petticoats, high-heeled shoes, &c. I was rich, dear, and no money was spared to give me the pleasure of pleasing my parents. All through the long years, my love, I have kept the things, and to-day Bowden has written to desire the trunks to be sent on to Haredale. They will be at your disposal, Diana; for you are the eldest girl in the house, and will naturally have the arranging of things. All I ask you is to consult me now and then.'

'Oh, but I shall be only too delighted!' said Diana. 'How splendid of you, Mrs Mortimer! I really don't know how to thank you!'

All Diana's jealousy had vanished. She was once

more the petted, the admired, the looked-up-to Miss Ludlow. Mrs Mortimer, at least, knew her worth. She had not chosen to talk much to her hitherto, but that fact mattered little or nothing; she knew her worth now, and was treating her as she ought to be treated. What a splendid time she would have presently in the schoolroom relating this interview to Faith, to Miss Price, to Jacqueline!

'Of course I will consult you,' she said. 'Do you wish me to be the only one to do so?'

'Well, that was my idea,' said Mrs Mortimer; 'for, you see, I could not bear you all rushing in each moment to talk over matters with me. I have told dear Faith that I will be her friend if ever she needs one; but she will scarcely take the lead in the matter of the Christmas festivities. That is your rightful place, Diana—and I trust you will perform it worthily—as the young chatelaine of this great house.'

'Thank you. I think I understand,' said Diana. 'When the dresses come you will let me see them, and I will tell you what our schemes are. Of course I cannot quite arrange everything until the Rosses and MacMahons arrive.'

'There's no hurry, my love. Do what you do quietly and with dignity—that is the way to get through life. And above all things, Diana, think what pleasure you will give by your little entertainment!'

'We want it to be a somewhat big entertainment,' said Diana.

'Little or big, it doesn't matter. Think what pleasure you will give.'

'Yes—oh yes.'

'Think, also, Diana (if I may be permitted to allude to such a subject), of one'—Diana's brow darkened—'who, although she is brave enough to keep up an outwardly gay spirit, will have a very sore heart this Christmas. Do what you can to lighten her burden.'

'Do you mean Faith?'

'Yes, I mean your cousin, Faith King.'

Diana gave a slight laugh. 'I don't think her heart will be very heavy,' she said. 'She always seems to me a remarkably cheerful girl.'

'She has lost her mother, don't forget that. Think of these things at Christmas-time, and be extra kind to Faith. Take her a little bit under your wing. She is a dear child. She has suffered sorely. Neither you nor Jacky have ever suffered. Nevertheless, you in especial, Diana, can be as an angel of consolation to Faith this Christmas-time if you take her in the right spirit.'

'Thank you,' said Diana, rising. Then she added slowly, 'I wonder why you say these things to me? Do you think I am unkind to Faith?'

'I say what I say simply because you will naturally be at the head of affairs: that is right, seeing your position in this house. Faith is your cousin; but, compared to you and Jacqueline, she is a comparative stranger. Be kind to her, dear, and come and consult me with regard to the entertainment. I will promise you at least one thing—not to throw cold water on any schemes of your own; but it is possible I may have some ideas to give you with regard to bygone schemes of mine.'

'I am sure you can, you look so clever. And now, I must not tire you any more,' said Diana, rising as she spoke.

'Then it is a bargain, dear? You are Princess of the Revels; but I am Queen of the Revels.'

'Oh delightful, Mrs Mortimer! Yes, yes, yes!' Diana stooped and kissed the old lady's hand in a sudden fit of enthusiasm. A minute later she had left the room.

CHAPTER IX.

DIANA IS SPITEFUL.

THE Rosses arrived two days before Christmas, the MacMahons on Christmas Eve. Meanwhile, other guests of the older sort had taken up their abode at Haredale. Miss Price had gone away, her pupils clinging to her and almost crying as they bade her good-bye. She was to spend Christmas in Manchester with a large party of brothers and sisters, all younger than herself. The Ludlow girls, and even Faith, had provided little presents for each one of them; and Miss Price went away to enjoy herself and work hard for the amusement of those she loved, leaving many regrets behind her.

Ten girls were now, therefore, at liberty to do pretty much what they pleased at Haredale; for Gerty and Patty, although babies compared with the older ones, were allowed to have a good deal of their own way. They were devoted, however, to Goody; and had now attached themselves in an almost frantic fashion to Faith.

Since her interview with Mrs Mortimer, Diana had been in excellent spirits. She had not cared to reveal anything in connection with that interview even to Jacqueline; but she was, as she expressed it to herself, once more in her rightful place. Occasionally she went to have a private talk with Mrs Mortimer; and after each of these conversations she came out of the old lady's room more delighted with herself, and therefore more inclined to be kind to others. Even Faith felt the difference. Diana no longer shunned her. It is true she did not consult

her; but she did not keep her apart and at arm's-length, as she had done before Mrs Mortimer had taken her into her confidence.

Christmas Day was to pass with the usual festivities, the usual gifts, the usual rejoicings; and immediately after Christmas Day the ten girls were to throw themselves into the great scheme for the *tableaux vivants* and charades. It was Mrs Mortimer's wish that until Christmas Day was past they should not give up their time to this special entertainment. The charades and the *tableaux vivants* were to take place in the old hall at Haredale on the last night of the old year.

Besides the visitors staying in the house, a great many neighbours had been invited to be present; and, in especial, the children of the place and the poor people, as well as the servants, were to enjoy the fun. Diana constantly repeated to herself those magical words of Mrs Mortimer, 'You are Princess of the Revels.' She was quite agreeable, therefore, to falling in with all the old lady's suggestions; and everything went well—in fact, better than well—until Christmas Day itself. But on that special day something occurred which put Diana once more out of conceit with herself.

Faith, who had been much attracted by Mrs Mortimer's gracious kindness, ventured of her own accord to go and see the old lady. She had written to Chancy, and begged of her to send her a book which she thought might please Mrs Mortimer. It was a tiny Christmas book, beautifully got up, with several texts and illuminated words; it was bound in green calf and had gold edges. It was in one sense the merest trifle of a present, but in another it meant a great deal.

Faith's heart was very full as, with the little book in her hand, she ran off uninvited to the Rose Room. In reply to her knock, Mrs Mortimer said, 'Come in!'

and the young girl, in her black dress, her face slightly flushed and her eyes very bright, entered.

'I thought perhaps,' said Faith—'oh, I do hope I am not doing anything that you don't like!—but I just thought that perhaps you, being so close—so *close*—to my darling mother, would like this.' She put the little book into the old lady's hand and then stood by her side, watching her as she turned the pages.

'Why, Faith,' said Mrs Mortimer, 'this is beautiful! What lovely thoughts! And how I do love that special poem, "It may be in the evening, when the work of the day is done"! Why did you think of me in connection with that poem, my love?'

Faith felt herself trembling. 'They are all so full of life here,' she said, 'and so very, very gay. But you—you are on the borderland, and mother has crossed over; and I thought, somehow—somehow—that you'd understand if I gave you this. You won't think me a very presumptuous girl to offer you this tiny gift?'

'My child, I shall love you for it; I do love you for it. Stoop down and kiss me, Faith.'

Faith immediately fell on her knees and raised her lips to the old lady's.

'You must not fret for your mother,' continued Mrs Mortimer, 'for she is passing the most wonderful and beautiful Christmas Day that she has ever yet enjoyed; and when I go to her—and I may see her some time between this year and next—I shall tell her about you. You are a brave girl; you will, for her sake, lead a brave and good life?'

'I will try,' said Faith. The tears sprang to her eyes. Then she added impulsively, 'But I hate this joyous sort of Christmas Day; I miss her and my daddy so dreadfully!'

'Poor child! I can quite understand. My darling, I am not going downstairs this evening; would you

like to come to me after dinner for an hour? I shall rest very still during the day, for I am not up to much exertion nor to a great deal of society; but I should be quite ready for you then, and we could talk about your beloved mother.'

'If I might!' said Faith with enthusiasm. 'I should be thoroughly happy all day thinking of that happy hour.'

'Very well; I invite you. Lady Ludlow has given me permission to do just as I please, so you can come to me after the Christmas dinner is over. I think the others will quite understand.'

Faith looked doubtful. 'It doesn't matter,' she said after a pause, 'whether they understand or not; I will come.'

'My dear,' said Mrs Mortimer, looking at her fixedly, 'your Cousin Diana—she and you are good friends, are you not?'

Faith stood still for a minute. 'Diana has been much kinder to me of late,' she said; 'but I am sorry to have to say that she and I can never be great friends. She is not like Jacqueline, nor like the little ones Gerty and Patty.'

'My dear girl, we must try and comprehend that there are all sorts of people in the world, and that it is our duty to accommodate ourselves to different natures. It would be a very sad world if we only chose as friends those who exactly suited us. We must be friendly, and even affectionate, to all those with whom we come in contact.'

Faith made no reply to this.

'Thank you so much for the book, I shall prize it for your sake,' continued the old lady. 'And now, don't forget to come to me to-night.'

Faith left the room. She went back to the schoolroom, which was now gay with the hum of many voices. The girls were, most of them, going to church, and had their outdoor things on. Kathleen MacMahon

raised bright and beautiful dark-blue eyes to Faith's face as she entered.

Diana had been talking to Kathleen; but when Faith appeared she started away, and, going across the room towards the fireplace, said, 'Where have you been all this time, Faith?'

'I haven't been very long away,' replied Faith.

'I don't ask you whether you've been long away or a short time away. I ask where you have been?'

Faith felt very much inclined to say, 'It's no affair of yours,' but she remembered Mrs Mortimer's words. 'I will tell you, Diana,' she said. The colour came into her face and her eyes grew bright. 'I went to see dear Mrs Mortimer, and to take her a little present.'

Diana turned immediately, and, seizing the poker, began to poke up the fire into a great blaze. With a violent effort she held her peace, although she longed to say, 'What right have you to interfere with our Mrs Mortimer?'

Faith, having told so much, said again, after a long pause, 'Mrs Mortimer was very kind to me; she knows that I shall be a little—a little sad to-night.'

'And why should you be sad?' asked Diana brusquely. She was giving way to temper, although at the same time she was painfully anxious to control it.

'There's no use in telling you, Diana—is there?—if you can't guess. But Mrs Mortimer understands, and she has asked me to go to her for an hour after late dinner. 'Tis sweet of her, isn't it?'

'And you are going?' said Diana.

'Yes, I am going.'

'Well, do run off now and put on your hat and jacket, or we shall be late for church. The covered wagonettes will be at the door in a minute, and father never likes us to keep the horses waiting.'

Faith ran off to her room. By-and-by the whole

family had gone to church, two or three wagonettes taking the large party which now occupied Haredale.

It is to be regretted that, during the solemn and happy service Diana Ludlow did not once think of those blessed words, 'Peace on earth, goodwill toward men.' Her thoughts were most angrily absorbed with her cousin. Once or twice she looked at Kathleen; but Kathleen was not thinking about her, she was thinking of her devotions. She was a fine girl in every sense of the word—full of fun and spirit, and much delighted with the happy time which lay before her. Sophy Ross, on the other hand, was a very plain, sullen-looking girl. Diana wondered if by any chance Kathleen could be mean enough to mention the letter which she, Diana, had written to her. But there was nothing mean in the lofty expression of that fine young face; and she concluded that, whatever occurred, Kathleen would keep her secret to herself.

When the great party streamed out of the little church Diana found herself by the side of Sophy Ross. The day was a brilliant one—the air keen, the ground sparkling with frost.

'Oh, do let some of us walk home!' said Diana.

'I for one! I for one!' said Sophy eagerly. 'May I walk with you, Di?'

'Yes, I shall be delighted,' said Diana.

Kathleen turned and gave the pair a quick glance. 'Faith, will you walk with me?' she said.

Jacqueline found a companion in Nora MacMahon, and the rest of the girls preferred to drive.

'Let's keep back a little,' said Diana suddenly to her companion.

Sophy complied. 'Why, what is the matter, Di? You do look cross! Has anything put you out?'

'Nothing that ought really to put me out; and yet, somehow or other, I often do feel in a bad temper now.'

'I thought such a stately and beautiful creature as you could never know what bad temper meant,' was Sophy's reply.

'Oh, my dear, looks have nothing to do with temper.'

'Well, but what is vexing you? You might tell me. You know we were always good friends.'

'I know that,' said Diana. 'Mother wouldn't have asked you to spend Christmas here if Jacqueline and I didn't care for you all.'

'Of course I know,' said Sophy, putting on that downcast look which made her face even uglier than usual, 'that neither I nor Maud nor Hilda are a patch on any of you or on the MacMahons. Still, we mean well; and it's very nice of you to be fond of us.'

'Well, of course I am fond of you,' said Diana.

'What puts you out, Diana? Do say!'

Diana dropped her voice almost to a whisper. 'I do wonder if I can trust you?' she said.

'Trust me! Of course you can. Why, the amount of secrets I've kept, and never breathed one, at school! I am every one's confidante, and no one has ever got into trouble on account of me. You may trust me, poor Di! I will keep your secret; and, what is more, I will help you if I can.'

'Help me?' said Diana, turning and staring at her.

'Yes, if I can. I can quite guess that you are pretty miserable, and I can partly guess the cause.'

'Then you must be far cleverer than I gave you credit for. What do you suppose is the cause?'

Sophy tossed her head. 'It's that cousin of yours, Faith King.'

Diana clutched Sophy's arm. 'Sophy, you are clever! How can you tell?'

'I can tell things fast enough when I like. You are jealous of her. Don't deny it. I want to know all about her—why she is here, who she is, and all the rest.'

'You will promise most faithfully never to breathe a word of this to anybody?'

'Faithfully! faithfully!' answered Sophy; 'and what is more, I will help you if I can.'

'Well, it's just this: I *do* want you to help me.'

'I am sure I can,' said Sophy, who was very much excited and pleased.

'But before I say anything more,' said Diana, 'I want you to make me a further promise—that, of all people in the world, you will hoodwink—yes, that is the word!—hoodwink Kathleen MacMahon.'

'Between you and me,' said Sophy, 'I have no love for Kathleen. She is so sprightly and gay, and then I hate the people whom every one else admires. You had better let me know what you want, and be as quick as you can; for although the house is big, and there are ten girls in it, and we ought to have a rare old time, it isn't pleasant to be caught whispering together. Now, this walk is just our chance.'

'Well, then, I will tell you in a few words what I wish,' said Diana. 'I don't like Faith. I have nothing against her except simply that she doesn't suit me, and she has in a great measure deprived me of my sister Jacqueline's affection. She is, of course, my first cousin; and her mother married a clergyman, it is true, but a man of no special family and with little or no money. It isn't, remember, that Faith is poor; she will have money of her own some day, and she is not beholden to us in any way. But she is just—*Faith*, and I—I don't like her.'

'To be frank, no more do I,' said Sophy. 'I thought it very cool of her to go, all by herself, with a present to that wonderful Mrs Mortimer this morning.'

'Yes, wasn't it maddening?' said Diana.

Sophy burst into a laugh. 'Oh, I saw your feelings in your back, my dear, when you were poking the fire! It was, in my opinion, a very sneaking thing for Faith to do.'

'It was,' said Diana. 'But it was just like Faith. She hasn't been brought up as we have been. Her mother, my mother's sister, married a man who was both poor and eccentric. I have no doubt he is quite good; but not to put too fine a point on the matter, Sophy, Faith until she came here did not move in our set at all.'

'That is exactly what I was thinking,' said Sophy. 'But of course she is in your set now?'

'Yes, after a fashion.'

'What do you mean by "after a fashion"? She is your first cousin.'

'I know; and mother likes her, so does Jacqueline, so does Mrs Mortimer. Faith is just the sneaky sort of girl who would come round an innocent, downright sort of person like Jacqueline, and who would most easily influence Mrs Mortimer. You see, Mrs Mortimer is sorry for Faith because her mother died not long ago. I don't mean to say that Faith was not fond of her mother—I haven't the slightest doubt that she was; but I don't think she is breaking her heart about her—that is, if you ask me.'

'Of course she isn't,' said Sophy. 'People never break their hearts in these days; all that sort of thing is out of date.'

Diana was silent. She was wondering what she would feel if Lady Ludlow—whom she dearly loved notwithstanding her (Diana's) apparent coldness—was no longer there. After a pause she said, 'I do really and honestly believe that Faith was very much attached to her mother; but still there is no reason why she should take the foremost place at Haredale.'

'The foremost place!' cried Sophy. 'Why, whoever means to give her a thought?'

'Well, Sophy, you are very clever.'

'I think I am a wee bit,' said Sophy. 'It's well I've got something to boast of, for you can see for yourself that I'm no beauty. I am sharp enough,

though, and I can keep my own counsel. What is it you want me to do, Diana?'

'I would a thousand times rather leave it to you. But I have just been thinking that if by any chance we could induce Faith to put herself forward in the charades which are coming on, and then get her to make a mess of her part—in fact, to spoil it utterly and completely—it would open people's eyes with regard to her.'

Sophy's eyes sparkled. 'Why, that is quite a simple thing!' she said. 'Has Faith ever acted before?'

'I don't know—I rather fancy she has not; but I can assure you that, with all her quiet ways, she is very conceited. She isn't afraid of undertaking anything. You can imagine that she must be conceited when she dared to go uninvited to Mrs Mortimer's room this morning, and give Mrs Mortimer a present, forsooth! Why, none of us would do it!'

'Of course not,' said Sophy; 'you would have a great deal too much good taste.'

The girls talked together for a little longer, and presently they came in sight of the stately old house. Faith and Kathleen were having a nice time together, and Faith was laughing merrily.

'She isn't fretting about her mother,' said Sophy. 'I tell you what it is, Di, you leave it to me.'

'And you will faithfully promise not to say one single word—to Kathleen MacMahon, for instance?'

'Oh, catch me! I have no love for Kathleen MacMahon. But what share am I to have in the charades?'

'You have acted a good deal, haven't you, Sophy?'

'Yes,' said Sophy in a contemplative voice; 'I have done ever so many *tableaux vivants* and little plays and several smart charades. You know, plain as I am, I am one of those people who make-up well. Now, a beautiful face like yours, Diana, doesn't need

the footlights, and rouge, and wigs, and all that sort of thing, and patches, to bring out its charm. But there 's something about me which looks quite well on the stage; many and many a person has remarked it.'

'I am to be Princess of the Revels,' said Diana; 'and I can promise you one thing, Sophy—you shall have a leading part. On the whole, the very best plan would be for you and me to manage the charades and arrange the different parts for each of the other girls. We 'll have to sit in conclave to-morrow and make all our arrangements'——

'Well, and Faith shall have a jolly big part; she will be as pleased as Punch. But the last minute—the very last minute—oh, you will see what you 'll see! I had best not tell you in advance, Di; you 'll be twice as innocent and happy in your mind if you don't know.'

'Thank you ever so much, Sophy! Of course I don't want you to do anything really unkind to poor Faith.'

'Just to put her into her place, that 's about all,' said Sophy. 'I 'll manage it. And you, Di'——

'Well?' said Diana, looking in some astonishment at her young companion.

'It 's the sort of thing,' said Sophy, 'which of course won't fail, for I won't let it; nevertheless, I do this for you—not for myself. I don't care one little scrap whether Faith succeeds or fails in the charades. Now, you do.'

'You want me to bribe you?' said Diana.

'I want you to ask me here without my two sisters during the Easter holidays. Now, that isn't much, is it? Hilda and Maud think that they 're indispensable, and they are very fond of trying to snub me—not that they succeed, for I am far and away too clever for them; but it would do them a world of good if I were asked here in the spring

and they were not. That is a very little reward for a great deal of trouble on my part, and—and—of course some slight danger.'

'I can manage that,' said Diana. 'Now, perhaps I had better go and talk to Nora MacMahon; she is walking by herself. I cannot think where your sisters are.'

Diana felt a sense of loathing for Sophy. Sophy was going to help her, but to be helped by such a person was the last thing in the world to her taste. She disliked it more than words could say, and yet she was positively determined to humiliate Faith.

Faith, meanwhile, was having a gay time with Kathleen.

Diana ran up to Nora and linked her hand in her arm. 'Isn't it a glorious day?' she said.

'Yes,' replied Nora. 'But how slowly you and Sophy did walk! To be frank with you, Diana, I am not keenly interested in your friend Sophy Ross.'

'Just because she is plain! I think that is rather mean,' said Diana.

'It isn't that at all,' replied Nora. 'Kathy and I are at a school where there are several plain girls, and one or two of them are our very dearest friends. But there's something about Sophy—— Well, I don't quite like her.'

'Don't let's bother about her,' said Diana. 'One must take the good with the bad in this world; and I for my part see nothing bad in her. She is very clever and a wonderful actress.'

'Oh, I am sure she is a good actress. She acts all her life—she is never doing anything else,' was Nora's remark.

The girls walked about a little longer. The charades were discussed. Faith ran into the house, and Kathleen came up to her sister and to Diana.

'Run in, Nora, and get ready for the midday meal.—Diana, I want to have a word with you.'

'What is it?' asked Diana.

'Well, it's just this: I didn't show your letter to anybody.'

'I wish I hadn't written it,' said Diana.

'Then you have repented of the horrid, mean feeling which must have actuated you when you wrote it?'

'One can repent, cannot one?' said Diana.

'Of course—at least, I hope so. I want to say to you now that I saw you walking with Sophy.'

'And why shouldn't I walk with Sophy? She is our guest.'

'I was furious when I got your letter,' continued Kathleen. 'I couldn't imagine, even for a moment, how you could think I'd do anything mean of that sort. I—to lend myself to that sort of thing! But there was one girl at our school who, I thought, could and would do what you required, and that girl was Sophy Ross. The moment I had written the letter, which I did in a furious temper, I regretted very much that I had mentioned the circumstance. I don't want to feel unkind to Sophy, though she is no friend either to Nora or to me. I don't mind Hilda, and I don't mind Maud; but I do mind Sophy. She isn't straight, and I hate people who are not straight. What I want to say to you now is this—that I hope you won't act on my words.'

'Of course not,' said Diana.

Her heart sank low in her breast. Never, never before, with all her faults, had she told a downright lie; and now she was a liar! The pang of sharp pain which went through her was, however, quickly repressed. It even subsided when Kathleen said in a low tone and in that deep, beautiful Irish voice of hers:

'I have seen your cousin and talked to her, and I think she is quite, quite charming. You are a very lucky girl to have such a nice cousin as Faith

to live in the house with you; and as to doing anything to humble her or put her in a false position—why, I would rather cut off my right hand! I mean to love her while I am here, and to draw her out and make the very most I can of her. So, there!'

'Well,' said Diana, 'and so—there! I don't greatly care. I was in a passion too when I wrote that letter. You were in a passion when you replied to it. Faith annoyed me. You'd be annoyed, perhaps, if Nora's affections were taken from you and transferred to a strange girl—to Sophy, for instance?'

'I might be annoyed, but I wouldn't be spiteful,' said Kathleen.

'So you really think me spiteful?'

'Your letter was spiteful, undoubtedly; but as you have now repented there is no more to be said.'

'There is no more to be said,' was Diana's answer; and as the lunch-gong was now heard sounding through the frosty air, the girls entered the big house.

CHAPTER X.

A SCHEME OF REVENGE.

FAITH spent a very happy evening with Mrs Mortimer. Mrs Mortimer had the power of drawing out young people's feelings; she could do so by tender words, by gentle actions. Hers truly was 'a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathise.'

The girl went to bed very happy and contented, little guessing what traps were being laid to entangle her young feet. It so happened that Diana's room was next to Sophy's. It also happened that there was a connecting door between the two rooms. That door was as a rule locked; but on that Christmas Day, late in the evening, there came a tap at it.

Diana had bidden Jacqueline good-night. Jacqueline was sound asleep in bed. Faith was asleep in her bed. Diana had been sitting by the fire, thinking over many things. She was acutely conscious of what she had done that day; she was acutely conscious, also, of the fact that she had told a direct lie to Kathleen MacMahon. It had seemed to her during the day which had passed that Kathleen's honest, sweet brown eyes had looked into her face again and again, as though to read the truth there. But if Diana had one fault above another, it was rampant jealousy; and to see herself made little of and Faith made much of was more than she could stand. All the same, she hated herself for having, so to speak, given herself away to a girl like Sophy Ross; and she heartily wished she had not walked from church with her, nor put herself into Sophy's power.

She was thinking of undressing when there came

that very gentle tap on the door which divided the two rooms. Diana went swiftly towards it, drew back the bolt, and opened the door. Sophy stood at the other side. She was wearing a white dressing-gown, and her carroty-red hair fell in thick masses about her shoulders. Her hair, exceedingly ugly in colour, was profuse in quantity, and Sophy always made the most of it. She had a high forehead and rather wild-looking, nondescript eyes. Her face was flat and plain. She was very much freckled, and was altogether a girl who had not one vestige of good looks with which to congratulate herself.

Diana, as she stood now at the other side of Sophy's chamber door, looked like a being from another world. She too was in a white dressing-gown, and her long, curly fair hair hung almost to her knees. Her face—pale, classical, serene—looked as though no evil thought could ever visit it. Sophy's sharp, greeny-gray eyes seemed to read Diana like a book.

'Every one's in bed!' whispered Sophy. 'May I come in for a few minutes, Di?'

'Yes, if you don't keep me long. But I am sleepy.'

Sophy took no notice of this remark. She came boldly into the room, seated herself comfortably by the fire, and began to warm herself. 'It's a cold night,' she said.

'Yes,' replied Diana.

Sophy looked up and gave a slight smile. 'I told you to-day,' she continued, 'that although I am plain I am clever. I can read people like a book. After you had had your little talk with me, and let that venomous small snake of jealousy out of your breast, you had a further talk with Kathleen MacMahon. Of course you know that I and my two sisters and the MacMahons are at the same school at Eastbourne? We're not in the same set, however—oh dear, no! Kathleen is a kind of hoyden of a creature, and I

am—oh, very polite and quiet and lady-like' (here Sophy gave a curious laugh); 'but whether in the same set or not, we're in the same school. It would injure me exceedingly in the school if, by any chance, I were to have my little scheme for humbling Faith King discovered by Kathleen MacMahon. And now, what I have come to ask you is this: Is there the slightest fear of such a thing?'

'It depends on your cleverness altogether, Sophy. You said you would rather do the thing in your own way. I don't want Kathleen to know any more than you want her to know.'

'That is all right,' said Sophy. 'That is just what I wanted to be sure about. You weren't talking about me, by any chance, before dinner, were you?'

'Of course not,' said Diana; and her heart sank more than ever. It was Christmas Day, and she had told another lie!

'That is all right. Then I think I quite know what to do.'

'Thanks,' said Diana. 'We'll all meet in conclave in the schoolroom after breakfast to-morrow. We haven't a bit too much time to get ready our charades and *tableaux vivants*.'

'I have thought over the charades,' said Sophy, 'and I know some real good ones; and there's one special *tableau vivant* which I mean to devote to Faith, and Faith alone. She will be very proud at first, and afterwards she will be terribly humiliated. We must discuss it to-morrow; but what I want to say to you now is this—that I don't want Faith, or Kathleen MacMahon, or any of the rest of the party, to know the exact part which Faith is to take until the day of the charades.'

'What do you mean by that?' asked Diana.

'Exactly what I say. If Faith were to know beforehand she would go to that precious Mrs Mortimer of hers, and Mrs Mortimer would be quite

clever enough to see through our little game. But at the very end Faith must take the part, as it were, out of good nature. I can assure you it will be a very salutary lesson to that young woman. And you will be true to your promise to me and invite me here for Easter, won't you, Diana?'

'Oh, I dare say I can manage it,' said Diana in as careless a tone as she could.

'I want you to say that you *will* manage it; I don't want any doubts on the subject. When a person says "I dare say," a person can get out of the whole thing; but that won't suit me at all. I must have your definite promise if I do this thing and do it cleverly.'

'Very well, I suppose I'll promise,' replied Diana.

'That's all right. Faith's a nuisance, but we'll soon put her in her true position. And the best of it is, my dear, that not a soul will know or guess; it will just seem that she is obliged to take the part, and of course she won't know how to manage it. And—oh, I don't think I'll tell you any more until the day comes. The less you know the better.'

'You're very queer, Sophy. I sometimes wonder if I have done right in trusting you as I have done.'

'Right!' said Sophy—'right! Well, yes, I think you have done right. You couldn't go on as things were, having an interloper coming into the midst of your family and taking the foremost place. You see it's just this way, Di: you have confided in me, and, whether you like it or not, you've got to go on confiding in me; for what you tell me I never forget —never. I thought I would just come into your room to-night and tell you that I have a plan firmly fixed in my head for the complete humiliation of Faith King, and that you won't be in the very least mixed up in it. Now, don't you think I am pretty smart to have thought out a matter of that kind in the time? For, if you don't, I do.'

'I do, Sophy—I do. Yes, I suppose it is all right. But, somehow, Sophy, I feel rather miserable to-night.'

'It's a goody-goody sort of night,' said Sophy, yawning slightly. 'One always has those sort of feelings at Christmas-time. But to-morrow—Boxing Day—you will be quite a different creature. Now, if you're not sleepy, I am. Good-night, my dear—good-night.'

Sophy left the room, and Diana sat long by her fire. She was seated thus, and just wondering whether she should go to bed or not, when she was rather startled by a tap at her door. She said, 'Come in!' and Kathleen MacMahon entered.

Kathleen was altogether too brilliant a sort of girl to be overlooked in any company. Wherever she went she was loved. She was not exactly beautiful, for her features were quite irregular; but she had sparkling, glorious eyes, pearly teeth, a glowing sort of complexion, and masses of wavy jet-black hair. She was, in short, a typical Irish girl. But what was more charming even than her general appearance was the kindliness which shone out of her eyes and smiled round her beautifully cut lips.

'Well, Di,' she said, 'we have seen very little of each other to-day. It is Christmas night, and I thought I'd like to say good-night to you.'

'Sit down, won't you, Kathleen?' said Diana.

Kathleen sank into a chair. She looked into the fire. Then she slowly turned her eyes and fixed them on her companion. 'That letter of yours'—— she began.

'Oh, I thought we were going to forget all that!'

'So did I,' said Kathleen. 'But I saw you having a very earnest conversation with that most uninteresting young person Sophy Ross to-day. Now, I feel myself in a way responsible to you for having suggested that you should make Sophy Ross do your

dirty work. You see, my dear Di, Sophy and I are schoolfellows. We are not a bit in the same set, but we happen to be in the same school; and I cannot imagine why I, in a fit of temper, should have said what I did about her. I came here to-night to ask you, as we have been hearing so much to-day about peace and goodwill toward men, to promise me to have nothing whatever to do with Sophy in the connection which I alluded to—namely'——

'I spoke to you already on that subject,' said Diana. 'Can't you trust me, Kathy?'

Kathleen looked at her and her eyes laughed. 'To tell the honest truth,' she said, 'I don't think I can. I admire you very much, Diana, and I will tell you why I admire you—because you are a complete contrast to myself. I am all "go" and vitality, and I've got a horrid little snub-nose and not a regular feature in my face; whereas you are as statuesque as though you were a young goddess, and you are perfectly calm and cool too. All these things which I can never, never possess I envy in you. But I don't want you to sink down, Di. There are some things which one can do and which completely spoil the character, and these are the sort of things that—that you can do if—if you make a friend of Sophy Ross.'

Diana was silent. Kathleen always held great fascination for her. To Kathleen she could have been almost loving. She admired her; she rejoiced in her fun, in her good-humour, in her Irish wit; she liked the little touch of brogue in her speech; she adored to hear some of Kathleen's racy Irish stories. But just now she would have given a great deal to get Kathleen out of the room; for she had committed herself to Sophy, and in a way which she could never, never get over, try as she would. She had recognised one fact to-day about Sophy; it was this—she was not honourable, she would use Diana as a means to aggrandise herself. Diana, therefore, now looked into

the fire and pretended to comb out her long fair hair.

Kathleen watched her anxiously. 'What a splendid girl Jacky is!' she said. 'What a very nice girl Faith is! Of course Faith's a little depressed to-day —one can scarcely wonder at that after all she has undergone; but she is nice through and through. Her mother must have been quite charming.'

'Don't praise her, please,' said Diana in a whisper which was almost hoarse.

'I wonder, Diana Ludlow, that you condescend to be jealous of a girl like Faith—an orphan girl who can never take your position and who cannot possibly do you any harm!'

'I didn't say I was jealous of her now.'

Kathleen shrugged her shoulders. 'Oh, my dear,' she said, 'seeing is believing. Well, all I can tell you is this—that I know Sophy, and the less you have to do with her the better. Her sisters are fairly all right; but there is no mean thing Sophy would not do to encompass her own ends. She is crafty and sly and deceitful. I can't imagine how our mistress, Mrs Fennimore, keeps her in the school; but Sophy is so clever that she conceals her worst faults from her teacher. She has a great power, too, over a number of the girls, and that power is not for good. I want you—I want you to promise me, Diana, that you will just keep her at a distance while she is here. Of course, as your visitor, you must be polite to her; but don't be more—please, dear Di!'

'It's all very fine for you to say that,' said Diana, 'when it was you yourself who put the idea into my head of asking her to help me with regard to Faith.'

Kathleen looked distressed. 'I told you I was in a passion when I wrote that letter. You did write me a real mean letter, Diana. How could you expect that I, a MacMahon, would stoop to the horrid, dirty work you asked me to undertake?'

'I might have guessed you would not. Well, let us forget that letter.'

Kathleen rose very slowly to her feet. 'Now, I will tell you something,' she said. 'I have that letter, and I mean to keep it; and if—if anything very unpleasant happens while I am here with regard to Faith, I'll—— Oh no, I won't injure you—by no means; but I might have to confide, say, in Mrs Mortimer. I'm not going to have the dear little charming Faith rendered unhappy; so you look out, my dear, for when Kathleen MacMahon says a thing she means it.'

'Hallo, Kathy! When are you coming to bed?' said Nora's gay voice at that moment. She knocked at the door, then burst it open. Nora was not nearly so pretty as Kathy, but she was very gay and bright, and a universal favourite.

Kathleen rose at once. 'Good-night, Di,' she said. 'Why, it's close on twelve o'clock! Think of us little schoolgirls being up so shamefully late! Goodness! We have had a jolly day!'

CHAPTER XI.

DIANA PUT OUT.

THE next day the real excitement began. There was a family of girls who lived about a mile away from the Ludlows. They were called the Chestertons, and were quite ordinary and everyday, and good-natured and obliging. It was Kathleen who suggested that the Chestertons (there were three in all) should be asked to help in the charades.

'For we can't have too great a variety in our entertainments,' she said. 'We can't have the same girls appearing over and over again, and I know several parts which will suit the Chestertons exactly.'

The Chesterton girls lived at a place called the Grange. They were not nearly so wealthy as the Ludlows, but they were comfortably off. They also lived at home, and were educated by governesses and masters. Their names were Julia, Anne, and Penelope. Julia and Anne were the sort of girls one might meet any day of the week. They were neither ugly nor the reverse, they were neither very tall nor very short, they were neither very clever nor very stupid. They were singularly alike, however—both of them having rather round brown eyes, hair to match, somewhat pale complexions, and lady-like manners.

Penelope, on the contrary, although the youngest, was far and away the cleverest of the family. Had she been brought up in different surroundings she might have been very sparkling and bright; but being the youngest and 'only a Chesterton,' as her sisters took great care to inform her, she was nothing in particular. She was a very fair girl—nearly as fair as Diana Ludlow, but without her graceful height

or her regular features. Her eyes, however, were remarkable; they were of a dark, deep-gray, capable of looking black at times, and she had very long and curly black lashes. Those eyes of hers could express a thousand emotions; and Kathleen MacMahon always believed in Penelope Chesterton's cleverness.

'Let 's have them,' she said. 'They would enjoy it beyond anything. They haven't such a gay life as the rest of us, and I know a part which will exactly suit little Pen.'

Accordingly the Chestertons were invited, and came gladly to join the merry conclave.

During the days that followed Diana was exceedingly careful to keep away from Sophy Ross; and Sophy, to all appearance, took no notice whatsoever of her. Sophy was a born organiser; but, with all her cleverness, she had the grace to keep herself in the background. She organised without appearing to do so. Several charades were arranged; but the most striking features of the coming entertainment were, of course, to be the *tableaux vivants.*

Sir Charles and Lady Ludlow had given their girls permission to go to any necessary expense to make these as perfect as possible. There was a stage erected in the great hall for the purpose; a very thin curtain of finest gauze was to be let down between the actors and the audience, thus giving a somewhat cloudy effect. Day after day, when tea was over, the girls rehearsed their different parts on the stage.

Faith felt quite happy and excited; but, to all appearance, she had not been asked to do anything in particular. On one occasion she was to be the handmaid of Kathleen MacMahon, but that was a very simple part which required hardly any coaching. Faith was by nature not at all a good actress. She had never acted before, and was shy of putting herself forward in any way whatsoever. She was glad to have subordinate parts; and she spent a

great deal of her time with the younger children, Patty and Gerty, who adored her, and who got her to tell them stories of her life in London.

Diana sometimes wondered how Sophy was going to keep her word; but, true to her resolve, and very much fearing Kathleen MacMahon's watchful eyes, she did not say anything about her thoughts. At the same time there came ideas through her mind which made her almost wish that Faith were out of it altogether; for poor little Faith was very modest and retiring, and kept herself—as the old saying is—a good deal to herself. Diana might have altogether forgone her scheme of revenge on Faith, and her determination to humiliate that young person, had it not been for a small incident which occurred the day before the great entertainment was to take place.

On that particular day Diana had arranged to go and have tea with Mrs Mortimer. Mrs Mortimer had been much interested in the young people's arrangements. She had not interfered with them—she was far too wise to do anything of that sort; but she liked the girls—those of them who cared to do so—to come to her room and talk things over with her. She had made a few valuable suggestions, which Kathleen, at least, was only too keen to carry out. Then the great trunks of wonderful dresses had arrived from Court Abbey, and were indeed invaluable.

Altogether, things were going exceedingly well; and Diana, excited, carried out of herself, surrounded by her young companions, had more or less forgotten Faith's existence until the day before the charades and *tableaux vivants*. On that day she had determined to have a long talk with Mrs Mortimer. She was anxious about a certain part which she was to take; she was to represent a classical scene, and did not know if the dress she was to wear was quite right. It was the sort of dress which would suit her young statuesque figure to perfection. She felt that when

she appeared in this special scene she would be at once proclaimed Queen of the Evening and Princess of the Revels. But there was a question or two which she wished to put to Mrs Mortimer.

She knocked, therefore, at the old lady's room door soon after five o'clock. Everything was now fully arranged except with regard to the particular gold fillet which Diana was to wear round her fair head.

Mrs Mortimer's voice said, 'Come in!' and Diana entered. She stopped short on the threshold of the pretty room. Mrs Mortimer was looking exactly as usual. The tea-equipage was on the table, and Faith —the Faith whom she hated; oh yes, she knew now how deeply she hated her!—was pouring out tea for the old lady. Faith, looking quite at home and perfectly happy, was helping Mrs Mortimer to some tea and buttering some toast for her.

Just at the moment when Diana appeared Mrs Mortimer was saying, 'When tea is over I mean to tell you a wonderful story of my past life, Faith, my dear.'

Diana caught the words. She stood still. Then she said abruptly, her fair face turning crimson, 'Oh, if I am in the way I had better go.'

'By no means, Diana,' said Mrs Mortimer. 'Come in.—Faith, place a chair for your cousin.—Have you had tea, Diana?'

'Yes, thanks,' said Diana. She made a great effort to conquer her ill-humour, but Mrs Mortimer observed that she cast a hasty and almost vindictive glance at her cousin.

Faith, who had been looking quite happy and perfectly contented, and almost like her old self, changed colour when Diana gave her that swift glance. She hurriedly resigned her place at the tea-table. 'You will pour out, won't you, Diana?' she said. 'I will sit near Mrs Mortimer; and you will pour out tea for me, won't you?'

'Nothing of the sort!' said Diana. 'I am the last person to interfere. I do not want to interfere with you, Faith. I wanted to see Mrs Mortimer; but another time will do quite well.'

'But why should it be another time?' said Mrs Mortimer. 'Faith, surely, cannot be in the way?—Keep your place, Faith, my dear. I asked you to come here and pour out tea for me to-night, and I do not wish any one else to do so.'

Faith sat down again. The colour returned to her cheeks and her eyes grew bright, but she wished most heartily that she was out of the room.

'What I have to say to Mrs Mortimer is private,' said Diana, speaking in a haughty tone, 'and cannot be repeated before a third person.'

'I am really sorry,' said Mrs Mortimer; 'for, you see, Faith happens to be my guest. So you must come to me another time, Diana, if you have anything private to say.'

'Thanks,' said Diana, backing towards the door.

'But although you may not be able to tell me your secrets, dear, in the presence of your cousin, you surely need not run away in a hurry?'

'Oh yes, we're very busy,' said Diana. 'I will come another time.' She hastily left the room.

When she was gone Faith could not help uttering a slight sigh. 'I had hoped'—— she began.

'What did you hope, my dear child?'

'I had heartily hoped that—that she was beginning not to mind my being here.'

'She won't mind it, dear, when once the holidays are over; and you must not take any notice of her now. She has always been accustomed to being first.'

'But, dear Mrs Mortimer, she is first still!'

'I know it, Faith; but then, my dear child, there is such a thing as jealousy. You must learn to beware of it.'

'I can't imagine,' said poor Faith with a sigh, 'why

any human being should be jealous of me. There's nothing to be jealous about. I am quite a stranger here.'

'You mustn't imagine that, dear Faith. You are quite one of the family. You must uphold your own. Your fault, my love, is that you are a little too humble.'

'I am so happy here alone with you!' said Faith. 'You have made—oh, such a difference in my life!'

'And you in mine,' said Mrs Mortimer in a tone which she very seldom used, for she was a lady who only praised when praise was really due.

Meanwhile, Diana, fuming inwardly, all her worst feelings towards Faith roused to the utmost, was walking quickly along the corridor which divided the girls' wing of the house from the other part. On her way she suddenly met Sophy. Sophy was passing Diana without a word when Diana stopped her. Diana's great big, beautiful blue eyes were blazing.

'Why, Di, you do look handsome! What is up now? You are angry about something, and anger becomes you.'

'Don't bother me about my looks!' said Diana. 'That sly puss—that mean little thing Faith King—where do you think I have found her?'

'Oh, I can easily guess,' said Sophy. 'I saw Bowden, Mrs Mortimer's maid, bring Faith a note this morning. I suppose it was an invitation to go and have tea with the precious dear old lady. Have you been to see the dear old lady, Diana?'

'Yes. I wasn't satisfied with your idea as to the exact way of wearing that gold fillet with my Grecian dress, and I wanted to consult Mrs Mortimer. You know she is quite learned in classical story—which is more than you are, Sophy.'

'Well, I am learned about a good many other things if I am not about that,' said Sophy with a slight laugh. 'And you found Faith?'

'I found that interloper established there, pouring out tea forsooth, and looking as at home as though she were Mrs Mortimer's grandchild.'

'And you are naturally very angry, dear Diana.'

'I am not pleased.'

'Of course you are not: you who are Princess of the Revels to be supplanted by a girl like that! But never mind, my dear—never mind; it 'll soon come to an end.'

'I don't know how it can,' said Diana. 'To tell you the truth, Sophy, Faith has been so quiet and so modest during the last few days that I was almost beginning to like her; but now'——

'Now you hate her,' interrupted Sophy.

'I do! I do! I can't stand that mean sort of going on. And I heard Mrs Mortimer say, just as I entered the room, "I will tell you a wonderful story of my past life." How dare she—Faith—Faith, forsooth!—get into the good graces of a woman like Mrs Mortimer?'

'This is very interesting—very interesting indeed,' said Sophy. 'But go on, Diana; you have something else in your head.'

'I was so pleased with Faith, on the whole, until to-night, that I was almost going to ask you, Sophy, not to do anything—anything at all—to-morrow night.'

Sophy gave a little skip. It was light and festive. 'And you thought, after you confided in me, that I—*I* had forgotten all about it?' she said.

'Well, as far as the tableaux are concerned, you certainly seem to have forgotten all about it,' said Diana.

'I never forget,' said Sophy in a very calm tone. 'But tell me, Di, just once—just for my own satisfaction—you want me to go on now?'

'Yes, I do, I do; truly I do!'

Just then a number of girls were seen approaching.

Diana dashed off in the direction of her own room, and Sophy disappeared into one of the sitting-rooms. Diana was somewhat dismayed to observe that Kathleen MacMahon had witnessed her interview with Sophy. Diana was not the least afraid of her sister Jacqueline, nor, in fact, of any one else of the party; but she was afraid of Kathleen.

She had not been a minute in her room before there came a tap at the door, and Kathleen entered.

'Well, Di,' said Kathleen, flinging back her head and speaking with her usual *bonhomie*, 'and how goes the world?'

'All right,' said Diana.

'All wrong, you mean. I can see you are put out about something.'

'Well, so would you be if you were in my shoes.'

'Why, what has happened, Diana dear? Do tell me!'

'Oh, it isn't worth speaking about.'

Kathleen looked at her attentively. 'I always used to consider,' she then said slowly, 'that you were a very, very clever, above-the-average sort of girl. I used to wish with all my heart and soul that you were at school with us. I used to think what a good part you would take in the school, and how you would be admired just for those qualities which I, alas! lack; for I am all impulse and passion, I am all fire and enthusiasm. I used to say to myself, "Diana Ludlow can be really great." But now'——

'Thank you so much for your last two words,' said Diana, speaking in a very slow and yet indignant voice. 'Why do you say, "But now"?'

'Only because you are changed, dear, and there are some things in your character which I did not think —no, did *not* think, Di—you possessed.'

'Oh, now you have begun to speak out!' said Diana. 'What things in my character have you discovered that you did not think I possessed?'

'Well, you are exceedingly jealous of a most harmless, good, amiable girl.'

'I am not,' said Diana.

'You don't ask me her name,' said Kathleen.

'I know to whom you are alluding, of course. You are thinking of my cousin Faith King. Why in the world should I be jealous of her?'

'That is what puzzles me,' said Kathleen. 'And yet I know you are; because, if you were not jealous, you, Diana Ludlow—you who can take any place in the future—would not talk to, would not confide in, a person like Sophy Ross.'

Diana laughed somewhat harshly. 'Aren't *you* showing jealousy now?' she said. 'Why should you dislike poor Sophy? I see nothing wrong in her. She cannot help being plain.'

'My dear, of course she can't. And do you think I mind anything about her as regards that? It isn't her plainness that troubles me. It is—it is—Di, let me whisper to you—it is the extreme smallness of her soul, and it is so bent on—— Oh, I dare not say any more! But listen to me, Diana. I think I am a match for Miss Sophy; and if she does anything to injure Faith King I believe that I can put my spoke in the wheel. That is all, but I thought I'd say so.'

Before Diana could utter another word Kathleen had left the room. The evening passed without anything special occurring. The Chestertons were invited to stay in the house until after New Year's Day, and on the last day of the old year the revels were to take place. As this entertainment was got up solely by the children of the party, the older people were supposed to know nothing about it; but by common consent the great central hall was left on the last day of the year to the use of the young entertainers. There was always a stage in the hall, this was indispensable. In the morning rows of seats

were brought in, which were raised tier on tier so that every one could see what was going on. Numbers of people—in fact, about two hundred altogether—were invited to see what the children had planned for their pleasure, and Sir Charles and Lady Ludlow were full of happiness over the success of the whole thing.

'It does our girls such good!' said Sir Charles.

Lady Ludlow echoed his words.

Meanwhile the young entertainers were exceedingly busy in the schoolroom wing of the house. Even Patty and Gerty were to take some very small parts. Bowden was instructed by Mrs Mortimer to render all possible service in dressing the young people for their different tableaux or charades. No expense was spared. The whole entertainment was expected to be a most brilliant success.

It was on the morning of that same day that Diana, after passing an almost sleepless night, stole softly in the early hours to Sophy's room. Sophy was in bed and sound asleep. The day had scarcely broken; and Diana, as she bent over the young sleeper, could but dimly discern her features. She had no time, however, to speak to her unless she spoke now and at once. She, therefore, shook Sophy by the shoulder.

Sophy Ross started up in bed, saw Diana, said, 'Hallo, is that you? What do you want now, Di?' and became wide awake on the instant.

'I want to say—to say,' whispered Diana in a hoarse sort of voice, 'that on the whole I think it would be wiser to leave Faith King out of this matter.'

Sophy gave a gay laugh.

'My dear good Di, how you are fretting yourself!' she said. 'You will be quite ill. You won't be able to take the part of Nausicaa at all if you go on like this. Nausicaa was so bright, you know, although

she was truly Greek; and you have great black shadows under your eyes.'

'Leave me alone! I won't do anybody any harm. I am afraid of you, and that's the truth, Sophy.'

Sophy gave one of those merry, childish laughs for which she was celebrated. 'Afraid of poor little me!' she said. 'Well, what next?'

'I don't know, I'm sure. But I am. Sophy, I think you are—you are'——

'Say it out, love; say it out! You think I am wicked. But then, after all, I am not quite so wicked as you are, am I?'

'Only, I'd so much rather you'd let the whole thing drop now.'

Sophy smiled once more. 'I won't get you into trouble,' she said.

'There is something I want to say to you,' said Diana. 'Kathleen suspects something.'

'Kathleen—Kathleen MacMahon? But it was she who suggested that I should help you!'

'Yes. But surely there is such a thing as repenting?'

'Do go to bed, Di, and leave things to me. What has Faith done all this week except the most unimportant parts?'

Diana felt that she did not dare to stay with Sophy another moment. She left the room; and Sophy lay warm and snug in her bed, thinking many thoughts in that active mind of hers.

Sophy Ross had nothing whatever before her in the world except what she could make of it herself. When her education was finished she would be obliged to earn her living. She was not beautiful. A sum of money had been set aside by a friend for her and her sisters, to be spent in giving them the best education possible; but when that was exhausted each girl would have to find her niche in the world. Now, a plain and penniless girl often finds

it exceedingly difficult to find that same niche; and Sophy, unlike her sisters Maud and Hilda, was determined that hers should not be by any means a small one. Although she was by far the plainest of the family, she had the greatest amount of talent. She could influence, she could guide, she could control. At school she led a small party, who followed her in everything. She was far too clever to show what her real ideas were; but she was quite determined that the world should be at least a richer and a more valuable place because she, Sophy Ross, had lived in it.

She felt now that a great opportunity had come to her when she began to influence so great a person, in her own estimation, as Diana Ludlow. As to Faith King, she was not worth thinking about one way or the other. But to please Diana, to put Diana into a position in which she would be more or less in Sophy's power—this would delight the schoolgirl, and nothing whatever would induce her to give up the scheme which filled her mind. She had made all her preparations, and was not going, for any reason that Diana could possibly bring forward, to forgo her intense enjoyment now.

Sophy could make herself extremely agreeable when she pleased; and it so happened that, curious as it may be to relate, she had won the affections of Bowden, Mrs Mortimer's maid. Bowden thought her a very plain, but a very nice, young lady. She was not high and mighty, like the other young misses whom Bowden was attending on and helping with all her might and main. She was hail-fellow-well-met with Bowden; and one day, when the poor woman was suffering from acute toothache, Sophy had come to her room and given her something which had greatly eased her pain.

'I am so grateful to you, miss!' said Bowden.

'It 's nothing,' said Sophy in as pleasant a voice as

she could assume. 'I have an uncle who is a doctor, and he often told me that if bad toothache was treated as I have treated yours it would soon go. So you mustn't thank me overmuch, Bowden.'

'The relief is wonderful, miss.'

Now Sophy, as she lay in her bed, thought of Bowden, and wondered if she could help her. The result of her meditations was that she rose swiftly, put on her warm dressing-gown, and started off to that good woman's room.

'Bowden,' she said, 'you know how very, very kind Mrs Mortimer is about the *tableaux vivants?*'

'Of course I do, miss.'

'I wonder if you would let me have Mrs Mortimer's signet-ring for a few minutes just to look at. Miss Faith King, I know, wants it specially. Mrs Mortimer can have it back again within an hour.'

Bowden looked considerably surprised. 'I don't think I can, miss,' she said. 'Mrs Mortimer never allows that ring off her finger day or night. It was given to her by her husband years and years and years ago, and she always wears it. She would lend anything in reason—even the clothes off her back—but not her signet-ring.'

'Well, never mind; don't bother,' said Sophy. 'I wasn't asking for myself; it was for Miss King.'

'Is there any other way in which I can oblige you, miss?'

'No, thanks, Bowden. We have everything in perfect order now, I think.'

Sophy returned to her room and presently dressed, and joined the rest of the young actors at breakfast. Of course nothing was talked about but the entertainment of that evening; but things were managed with such skill, and the girls were so arranged as to have complete control in their different departments, that nothing whatever went wrong. Diana, Jacqueline, Hilda, and Maud were to have the arranging of

the hall. Diana was splendid as a decorator, Hilda and Maud were most useful as assistants, whereas Nora and the three Chesterton girls were busy from morning till night finishing the dresses they were to wear in the various scenes they were to enact.

Meanwhile, the day being beautiful, Mrs Mortimer went out for her usual walk. Very often now Faith accompanied her. But Faith, on this special day, had a violent headache and could not rise from her bed. Mrs Mortimer was therefore accompanied by her faithful Bowden. She was pacing very slowly up and down in the sun.

Sophy, from her window, saw the old lady and the faithful maid walking quietly together. Now was her chance. She ran as quickly as her feet could carry her in the direction of Mrs Mortimer's room. She tapped at the door. There was no reply; her fear that a servant might be there arranging the rooms was therefore set at rest. She opened the door eagerly and went in. The first thing she saw was Mrs Mortimer's signet-ring—that ring which she was supposed never to take off her finger; it was lying on a little tray in her dressing-room. Sophy snatched it up, slipped it into her pocket, and went joyfully out of the room. 'The Fates do favour me!' she said to herself.

She was in such high spirits she could almost have laughed aloud. After this experience the day seemed, to Sophy Ross, to fly on wings. She was all too keen for the evening to come, when she would enjoy her triumph. In the course of the morning she went to visit Faith in her room. It would never do for Faith to be ill. She knocked softly at the door. A voice said, 'Come in!' and she entered.

Faith, her cheeks flushed, her eyes bright, was lying gazing up at the ceiling. She started when Sophy appeared. She had never thought a great deal about Sophy. Sophy had not influenced her one way or

the other. She had not the slightest idea of the conspiracy between Diana and Sophy which was to result in her undoing. Poor little Faith was going through a fit of terrible home-sickness. She was thinking of the mother she would never see again on earth. She was thinking of the old Rectory, of Miss Chance, and of Martin and Jane. She was also thinking of her father. What was he doing to-day? Was he very, very busy preparing for his services on New Year's Day? Faith recalled that time last year when she and her mother had helped him —when she had been, as she now expressed it, quite the happiest girl in the world. There was no reason why she should not be happy now; but she was not. Even Mrs Mortimer, good as she was to the orphan girl, could not heal that sore wound which had been made in Faith's young heart by her mother's death.

But Mrs Mortimer *did* mean a good deal to Faith. When with her she was at home. It mattered nothing at all to the girl that Mrs Mortimer was one of the grandest old ladies in her county, that she hardly ever gave her friendship to any one, that those whom she liked were envied by every one else in the place.

These things did not trouble Faith, because she knew nothing about them. But she did value something else: the sympathy which was not weakness, the kindly glance in the deep-set old eyes, the genial smile about the lips, the words of courage and hope which mingled in Mrs Mortimer's conversation. Faith felt quite sure that as long as she lived she would value Mrs Mortimer as the greatest friend she had obtained since her mother's death.

But to-day her head did ache badly. She had no heart for the festivities which were to go on in the evening, and she felt almost annoyed when Sophy entered.

'How are you, Faith?' said Sophy. 'I heard you were not quite well, and I came to inquire.'

'That was very good of you,' said Faith. 'Yes, my head does ache badly.'

'You must be all right for to-night, you know.'

'Oh, but,' said Faith, 'the parts you have given me are so very, very tiny, I don't think it matters much whether I am present or not.'

'You must be present, Faith—you really must! I have something I want to say to you.' As Sophy spoke she jumped up on to Faith's bed.

'What is it?' said Faith.

'I have a great secret to confide to you.'

'I'm not a bit of good about secrets. Don't tell it to me,' said Faith.

'But I must; I put it off until the last hour. You are to act alone in the last *tableau vivant*.'

'I am to act alone! What do you mean? I am coming in once as servant to Diana, and once again with Patty and Gerty; but that is about all. I don't take any important part.'

'Well, you know, you are very fond of Mrs Mortimer, are you not?'

'Of course I am.'

'You will do what she wishes, won't you?'

'Certainly, if in my power.'

'Well, now, Faith, Mrs Mortimer wishes, as a special honour to her, that the closing tableau—the one which brings down the curtain and causes applause on all sides—should be taken by you.'

'Oh—but I can't—I can't!'

'You can—you can! It is a great, great honour. And—see, my dear, see! she has lent you her signet-ring. Here it is!'

'Mrs Mortimer—has lent *me*—that ring?'

'She has, most truly. Look at it.'

As Sophy spoke she took the ring out of her pocket and held it towards Faith. It was a beautiful,

very old-fashioned ring. It held the crest and coat of arms of the Mortimer family, and this crest and coat of arms were surrounded by the purest diamonds. It was a very large ring, made in a sort of marquise shape; and Faith put it on one of her little fingers, smiling as she did so.

'It is beautiful!' she said. 'And what does dear Mrs Mortimer want me to do?'

'She wants you to appear *as* Mrs Mortimer in the last tableau. I have got all the dress ready. You are just to come forward and show yourself. I will make you up. It is a profound secret—a most profound secret; not a soul knows anything about it, but Mrs Mortimer's heart is set on it. See, now; don't you believe me? Here is the ring as proof.'

'Of course I believe you. And this is her ring? Am I not to see her to-day?'

'No, you had better stay quite quiet to-day. As to the small parts, if you like I will get some one else to take them. But the last scene of all—the last tableau—is to be enacted by you as "Mrs Mortimer." I will dress you up for the occasion, and you shall wear the signet-ring. Think how much she has done for us all, Faith! You surely won't refuse this little whim on her part?'

'It is so unlike her!' said Faith.

'Unlike her or like her I cannot possibly decide, for I don't know her; but it is a fact, nevertheless, that she wishes it. Now, then, keep your ring—keep it safely. And go to sleep and get rid of that headache; for, whatever happens, you will have to appear in the hall as "Mrs Mortimer of Court Abbey" this evening.' Sophy had scarcely said the last words before she left the room.

The signet-ring lay on the bed. Faith took it up and looked at it. Then, rising very slowly, she put it carefully away in the drawer where most of her treasures were stored. She was very much surprised

at what Sophy had said, but at the same time she never doubted her for a single moment. The last tableau was to represent the proud old lady of Court Abbey, and Faith was the one who was to take the part. She wondered how she—who was so young, just in the very beginning of her girlhood—could appear on the stage as a very old woman; but if Mrs Mortimer wished it—dear Mrs Mortimer—she would do more than that for her. And the fact of her having lent her the signet-ring—that ring which she treasured above all her worldly possessions—proved the truth of the story.

The girl lay still, feeling greatly excited. She would do anything in the world for Mrs Mortimer, and if this act was necessary to please her she would go through with it. After all, it would only take a minute or so of time; and perhaps Sophy was right—it was a fitting homage to the dear, queenly old lady who was doing so much for them all.

The excitement made Faith's headache better; and she got up presently and joined her companions, not talking much to any of them, but avoiding Sophy's eye.

Thus the day sped on apace, and evening came. Early dinner was served for the young actors in the schoolroom, and after that all was hurry and confusion.

CHAPTER XII.

CARICATURING MRS MORTIMER.

SOPHY, without appearing to do so, was really taking the lead. She was arranging what every one was to do. She looked once or twice at Faith; but her glance was swift, and the girl did not even know that she was observed. She saw that Faith was excited and was evidently not quite well. Suppose Faith should be too ill to take that part in the evening which Sophy had designed for her, then all Sophy's plans would fall through. But this could not be thought of for a moment. In quick haste, therefore, Sophy substituted one of the little Ludlows to take the part of Nausicaa's handmaid, and also that other very minute part which Faith had prepared herself to enact. This could easily be managed, for the dress for the occasion would fit almost any girl.

Having put things so far in train, Sophy's next suggestion to Faith was that she should go and lie down in her room until the moment came for her to appear as 'Mrs Mortimer' on the stage. Faith was only too willing. Her head still ached furiously; her pulses beat fast in her veins; she felt ill and feverish. Nevertheless, at any cost, she would go through her part. She was really grateful to Sophy for her consideration. As to the rest of the girls (and Jacqueline was generally so very kind to Faith), they had no time to take any notice of her. Goody was already absorbed with her own two pets, as she called Gerty and Patty; and Bowden was in and out, arranging the dresses for the young people.

Nothing whatever was said with regard to the signet-ring. Sophy rather wondered at this, although,

at the same time, she was highly pleased. Was Mrs Mortimer so very, very old that she had forgotten her precious signet-ring? This Sophy thought scarcely likely. Things, however, were going well, and she felt quite sure with regard to her own future.

The evening came on. The guests arrived. The charades were played to a crowded audience. Great was the delight of the spectators. Word after word was guessed amidst clapping of hands and smiles on the part of those who looked on. The poor people of the village could scarcely contain themselves. They thought the young ladies at Haredale extremely clever. They compared what they now saw to what would be seen in a London theatre, very much to the detriment of the latter. They assured themselves that they delighted in this simple form of entertainment, which, after all, was not really so simple, but thoroughly satisfied their country souls.

Mrs Mortimer was among the foremost of the guests. On account of her great age she was given a seat in the front row; and she looked on eagerly, expecting her favourite Faith to appear at any moment, trusting that the girl to whom she had given so large a share of her old affection would prove herself capable on this occasion. But when tableau after tableau appeared, raising a shout of delight from the spectators, and then faded away in the mist, and Faith was not in any, the old lady said to herself, 'My dear child has no heart to play, and I do not love her any the less on this account. She is one of those who feel things deeply. It will take her a very long time—yes, a very long time—to get over her mother's death.'

The last tableau but one was that in which Diana made her signal triumph. Never before, perhaps, was there such a lovely Nausicaa. The part suited her to perfection. It is true the scene was a little above the heads of some of the audience, but the

The curtain again rose, and there appeared on the scene a little old lady leaning on a stick.

P. R. PAGE 123.

more intelligent amongst them clapped and cheered lustily. The beautiful girl did indeed look truly Greek in her exquisite costume, her golden hair falling long and low over her neck and shoulders, her classical profile exactly representing what the real Nausicaa must have looked like when she picked up shells on the seashore. Diana's attitude was really superb. She did not move an eyelid; she took quite the right position; she acted her part; she made a perfect picture, without a flaw. Then the curtain went down, and people began to talk one to the other. The idea amongst the guests was that the tableaux had ended. But, all of a sudden, the curtain again rose, and there appeared on the scene a little old lady leaning on a stick. She was dressed exactly as Mrs Mortimer used to dress when she went for her daily walk — the same shaped bonnet, the same cloak, the stick with its gold head. There was the anxious and yet sweet, puckered face; there was the deep-set eyes looking out on the world, full of expression; and on the left hand there gleamed, for all to see, the wonderful, the magical signet-ring.

This scene, which was quite unexpected, caused a queer sensation amongst the guests. No one could help recognising the resemblance between Faith King and Mrs Mortimer. Faith was bent down artificially so as to look about the size of the old lady. Her dress was an exact representation of what Mrs Mortimer wore; her eyes, for the time being, had precisely the same expression; her face was carefully got up to represent the wrinkles of extreme old age. But, above all things, on one of her white, small hands gleamed the ring—the signet-ring.

The people in the back rows began to clap; every one liked Mrs Mortimer. But the guests in the house were silent. Mrs Mortimer herself turned very red, then became very white, then rose slowly, then sat down again. The curtain dropped.

Lady Ludlow came hastily forward. 'My dear friend!' she said. 'Believe me, I had no idea of this.'

'The actor was Faith King, was it not?' said Mrs Mortimer.

'Yes.'

Mrs Mortimer was quite silent for a minute. Then she said gravely, 'I must thank the young visitors and the girls of the house for a pretty compliment. And now, I am tired and will go to bed.'

She left the great hall hastily. Every one felt that she was hurt and offended. As to Diana, her utter amazement when Faith appeared caricaturing Mrs Mortimer could be better felt than described. Her cheeks turned scarlet. She dared not look at Kathleen, who fixed her bright eyes on her face.

As soon as ever Mrs Mortimer was gone there was a buzz of conversation.

Lady Ludlow looked distinctly annoyed. 'Who could have put such an idea into Faith King's head?' she said. 'I am more vexed than I can say. Our dear old friend—to take her off like that! It was well done, of course; and that is what makes it so dreadful. And Faith to do it—Faith!'

Diana made no remark.

Kathleen, who was standing near, said, 'I am sure Faith would not do anything of the kind if she wasn't put up to it.'

'Oh, nonsense, Kathleen!' said Lady Ludlow. 'No one could put Faith up to a thing of that kind. She has been a great deal with Mrs Mortimer lately. Mrs Mortimer has been more than kind to her. And then the audacity of taking the dear old lady's ring! No one could possibly mistake the gleam of those diamonds or the shape of that magnificent signet-ring.'

The guests of low degree were now conducted into another part of the house in order to enjoy solid refreshments; but the visitors and the girls continued

to remark on Faith's conduct, and every one felt that she had made a very grave mistake.

Meanwhile Faith herself had staggered upstairs to her bedroom. Once her eyes, during that terrible scene when she had represented Mrs Mortimer in her *tableau vivant*, had turned towards the old lady, and the look which met her on that old face showed her at once that some one had told her something wrong. Before the curtain dropped, poor Faith felt nearly inclined to faint. As soon as ever she got behind the stage she said hastily to the first person she saw, 'Oh, take me upstairs! I am not well; I must go to bed.'

'You acted splendidly,' said Julia Chesterton, who was not sufficiently intimate with the family to understand what a really shameful thing Faith had done.

Faith made no reply. She left the room. Sophy was far too wise to take any further notice of her; but Kathleen sprang forward and helped her upstairs.

'Faith—how *could* you do it?'

'Do what?' said Faith.

'Take her off—*her*, of all people?'

'She—she wanted me to!' said Faith.

'Nonsense—nonsense, Faith! You know she did not want you to. Who in all the world wants to be laughed at and turned into ridicule? Of course you did your part splendidly—you are a born actress. But she was specially kind to you, and now you have hurt her fearfully. And Faith—my dear Faith—where is the signet-ring?'

'The—the ring!' said Faith in a puzzled voice. 'Oh Kathleen, isn't it on my finger?'

'No; you must have dropped it downstairs on the stage.'

'It was a little too big for me,' said Faith; 'I was very likely to lose it. Oh, please, Kathleen—go down and look for it at once! And let me get out of

these things; and let 's send them all back at once to Mrs Mortimer's room, and the ring as well. I want to go to bed and forget everything—everything!'

'I will go at once and search for the ring,' said Kathleen.

She went downstairs. The curtains were now hanging in front of the stage, but there was a light burning. Search as she would, however, Kathleen could not find the ring. After wasting about a quarter of an hour she went back to Faith to tell her that she could not find the ring anywhere.

'You do look ill!' she said. 'You must go to bed. If you are not better in the morning I am sure Lady Ludlow will send for the doctor. You didn't do this out of your own head. This was not your own thought, was it, Faith?'

'No, no, no! it was Mrs Mortimer who wished for it. There 's some one knocking at the door. Kathleen, I wish that ring could be found!'

It was Bowden who was knocking. She came in now, looking cold and stiff. 'Miss King,' she said, 'I should be much obliged if you would let me have my mistress's clothes and also her signet-ring.'

Faith pointed to the heap of clothes, which lay on a chair. 'Tell her I did my very best,' she said.

Bowden looked coldly at the girl. She was perhaps more angry than any one at having her beloved mistress ridiculed. 'I want the ring, miss,' she said. 'My mistress hardly ever parts with it; but for some extraordinary reason she took it off her finger this morning, and never missed it until she saw it on your finger to-night when you took her off. Oh yes, miss, you did it well—you did it cruelly! We little thought, any of us, when you—when you were so much with her, that you were studying her character as you did. I will thank you for the ring.'

'I will tell you the truth,' said Kathleen, speaking with emphasis, 'and you must just take the truth

from me to Mrs Mortimer. Somebody has been trying to injure Faith. Faith would never, of her own accord, have done what she did—never, never, never! I can't explain, for I dare not; but she was under the impression that Mrs Mortimer wished the last tableau to represent herself.'

'Mrs Mortimer—my dear, dear mistress to wish that!' said Bowden.

'Faith thought so.'

'Yes, I did think so,' said Faith, her eyes shining, her cheeks crimson.

Bowden gave a little snort. 'Queer ideas come into the heads of some ladies,' she said. 'Anybody like my mistress—like my mistress—to be, as it were, insulted—her age, her infirmities shown off as Miss King did! And then the ring! And how did you manage to get the clothes, miss? And how on earth did you get the ring?'

Faith longed to say, 'Sophy brought me the ring, Sophy brought me the clothes;' but something kept her silent. She had no apparent reason for disliking Sophy, and there was a sense of honour within her which prevented her abusing the girl now. It was just that sense of honour which Sophy had seen from the very first in Faith which had made her so sure of the success of her scheme.

After a time Kathleen said, 'Bowden, whatever Miss King did or did not do—whatever her motives were or were not—she is not well now and must go to bed.'

'All right, Miss MacMahon; I am sure I'm the very last person on earth to keep Miss King up. But my mistress has to be considered, and I want her ring.'

'I have something unpleasant to tell you, Bowden. The ring was rather big for Faith, and in the excitement—oh, I can't exactly explain it—it slipped from her finger. It probably rolled to one side of the stage.

I've been downstairs already to look for it, but couldn't find it. Of course it will be found in the morning. Anyhow, poor Miss King has not got it now, and she must not be worried about it.'

Bowden's face grew absolutely white. 'What!' she cried—'what! My mistress' signet-ring lost?—the one treasure she cares for more than anything else in the world! Oh, there are some young ladies past bearing; and I always did trust Miss King! But to borrow my mistress's clothes, to act the part she did act, and then—then to take the ring and to—to *lose* it! It is too much!'

'It will be found,' said Kathleen in her soothing voice. 'Try to make the best, not the worst, of things, Bowden. Miss King meant no harm. I am going to see Mrs Mortimer myself in the morning.'

CHAPTER XIII.

FAITH KING SUFFERS.

DURING the remainder of that night Faith lived through a perfect phantasmagoria of dreams. All her past life seemed to rush before her distorted and upset vision. She was once again the very unhappy girl who had lost her mother; she was once again kneeling by her mother's grave; she was once again pining for her father's sympathy and love.

Then there came a change over the scene, and she was happy and bright and cheerful because her mother—her darling mother, who loved her, who cared for her, who was so devoted to her—was alive and well and happy. Then there came darkness and an interval of oblivion. Then again there came dreams. Faith was at Haredale. She was being tormented by a number of girls, not one of whom she really cared for. Even Jacky, even Kathleen, were scarcely to her taste. Diana she did not like at all. The Chestertons were just everyday and of no moment whatsoever. But there was always Mrs Mortimer; there was always that one pleasant, cosy, delightful room to go to; there was that one kindest of all faces to look into hers; there was that one sweet voice to tell her stories, to sympathise with her, to make her happy.

Nevertheless, poor little Faith woke out of her terrible night of miserable dreams with a shriek, for she remembered, all too vividly, the look in that old face as she represented Mrs Mortimer on the stage—the look of downright horror, of absolute surprise, in the kind eyes; the cold, cold expression, which was not exactly humiliation, but which was the very

essence of pride, creeping over the old face. At that moment Faith knew perfectly well that she had hurt her best—in fact, as she considered her at that moment, her only—friend. She sat up in bed, screaming out, 'Oh, I didn't mean—I didn't mean—I'd never have done it—but—but'——

Just then a firm though kind voice said, 'Lie down, Faith. Why, how very hot you are! You're not a bit well. We must send for the doctor as soon as it is light.' The voice was the voice of Lady Ludlow. 'Don't go on in that exaggerated way,' she continued. 'What you did last night you did because you were unconscious of what you were about. You must have been so; no one else would have acted so madly—I mean no one in their sober senses would have dared to take-off a guest staying in my house, and especially such a guest as Mrs Mortimer.'

'But I was told that she wished it,' said Faith.

'Who told you that, my dear?'

'Oh, I can't say! Don't ask me! It is all over now. Perhaps I am going to die; perhaps I am going back to mother. Nobody understands me but mother. Only, I love Mrs Mortimer; she has been good to me.'

'You have a nice way of showing your love, Faith; I will say that for you,' remarked Lady Ludlow in a cold tone. She straightened the girl's bedclothes, gave her something cooling to drink, and in a few minutes Goody came in and took her place by the child's bedside.

Early in the morning the doctor was sent for. He said that Faith King was suffering from severe nervous shock; but he did not think there was anything very serious the matter, only that she must be kept very quiet for the next few days. He recommended a trained nurse to look after her, but when he did so Kathleen suddenly appeared.

'May not I be her nurse?' she said. 'I have

nursed lots of sick people. If I nurse Faith in the daytime, and if Goody sleeps in the room at night, won't that do?'

Dr Hartland agreed, and when he left the room Kathleen bent over Faith.

Faith put out one of her little hot hands. 'I can hardly, hardly think,' she said; 'my head aches so dreadfully. I scarcely know what is the matter. But I—I do want to see dear, dear Mrs Mortimer.'

She did not say a word about the ring; she had evidently quite forgotten it.

'Would it make you very happy to see Mrs Mortimer?' said Kathleen.

'Oh yes; I think it would cure me.'

Kathleen remained for a little time longer in the sick girl's room. Then she left it and went off in the direction of Mrs Mortimer's special suite of apartments. On her way there she met Diana.

'Well, Di,' said Kathleen, 'I hope you are happy now you have had your way? I didn't know you could possibly be quite so clever; but you have certainly had your way.'

Diana's face was very white. 'I have done nothing —nothing at all,' she said. 'I never was more amazed in my life than when Faith appeared on the scene as Mrs Mortimer. I believe the old lady is terribly vexed. I can assure you—I can positively assure you, Kathleen—that I had nothing to do with it.'

'Oh, nothing, of course!' said Kathleen in a somewhat mocking tone. 'But Mrs Mortimer is fearfully vexed and annoyed, and Faith is very ill. She won't bother you much for the next few days, Diana; but you can go your own sweet way—you can make up to Mrs Mortimer for the loss of her little favourite.'

'No, I can't. Mrs Mortimer is leaving Haredale to-day. She is very, very deeply hurt.'

'Then don't keep me now,' said Kathleen; 'for,

whatever happens, I must see her before she goes. By the way, Di—one moment first. Has any one found the signet-ring?'

'No; that is the queer, the inexplicable thing. Faith would be the last person in the world to steal the ring, and yet it is certainly lost.'

'Oh, of course Faith had nothing to do with it,' said Kathleen. 'Faith touch anything that did not belong to her! In the first place, she has heaps of money and does not want more; and in the next—why, she just couldn't do it. That ring *must* be found; and I think I know a way—— But don't keep me now. We have trouble enough in the house. Faith is certainly ill.'

Diana said nothing. She went miserably into her schoolroom, where she sat by the fire and pretended to occupy herself with a story-book. The rest of the young party were seated in groups, whispering together about the great event of the previous evening. All the *éclat*, all the success, of that great entertainment was swallowed up by the last *dénouement*—the caricature of Mrs Mortimer, presented on the stage by the girl to whom the old lady had been specially kind.

Kathleen, her heart on fire with anger, her beautiful eyes blazing, tapped at Mrs Mortimer's door. A voice said, 'Come in!' and she entered.

Bowden was in the adjoining room, packing trunks. The old lady was seated, somewhat sadly, in her usual arm-chair. A great deal of brightness had left her face; it looked years older than it had done yesterday.

'Ah, Kathleen!' she said, striving hard to speak as usual; 'you have come to say good-bye, have you not?'

'No, Mrs Mortimer, I have not,'

'Well, be that as it may,' said the old lady, 'I shall not leave for nearly an hour, and Bowden is

attending to all my packing. I shall be glad to get to my old home. It is not right for the old to leave home. I shall probably never leave Court Abbey again.'

'Oh, but you will—you must!' said Kathleen. 'We so love to have you here! You don't know what all we children think about you!'

Over Mrs Mortimer's delicate face there came the faint flush of extreme old age. Then she said in a gentle voice, 'To ridicule white hairs, to bring the old into disrepute, to make the very aged appear ridiculous—is that love—is that respect?'

Kathleen drew a chair forward and spoke eagerly. 'Now, I am going to tell you something,' she said. 'I dare not mention names; and yet—and yet—I could *almost* confide in you, but I won't. You are mistaken about Faith. Faith only did what she did because'——

'My dear Kathleen, you are a very good girl; but you will excuse me if I say that I would rather not hear Miss King's name mentioned. I was fond of her mother, and, for her mother's sake, I took the child up. But the child had another parent, and she has evidently taken after him in character.'

'Oh—Mrs Mortimer—forgive me! Is that quite worthy of you? Mr King is such a splendid clergyman!'

Mrs Mortimer closed her firm lips very tightly. 'We will talk of other matters, if you don't mind, Kathleen. There are some things I cannot bear to speak of. Faith King is one.'

'Then you will never forgive her?'

'I don't say that for a moment; but at the present I cannot speak of her. She is not what I thought her. I meant to do a good deal for her. She charmed me; she won my old heart. I intended to ask her to pay me a long visit at Court Abbey; but then, you see, my dear, there were scales before my eyes, and

I did not see the real Faith. I saw the real Faith last night when she appeared before all those people —all those people—the poor people in the village who have known me for so many years, Margaret Ludlow and her husband, all the guests, every one— as a *caricature of me*, and wearing my ring—my signet-ring. How did she get my clothes? How did she possess herself of my ring?'

'The clothes are brought back, but the ring—the ring will be found; I have made up my mind on that point,' said Kathleen. 'And now I am going to tell you something; and you will have to listen, please, even though you are old, and though I respect you more than any one else in the wide world. Faith, although she has been brought up in London, has never before been in the company of other girls. She does not know their ways; she has failed to understand them. She is incapable, at present, of standing up for herself. She is in very great grief for her mother; she has never forgotten her mother —never, for a moment. And all yesterday poor Faith was ill.'

'Ill?' repeated Mrs Mortimer; and now there came a slight thrill of anxiety into her tone.

'Yes; all yesterday she was ill. But she was informed that you particularly wished her to take the part which she took last night.'

'Nonsense, Kathleen! Who was there so foolish as to tell her that?'

'I am not permitted to enlighten you; only I don't think anybody ever yet found me out in a lie. I am not a specially good sort, but I just could not tell a lie; and what I say now is a fact—yes, a sober fact. Dear, dear little Faith'——

'My dear, you fail to convince me. No girl in her senses would, without asking me first, do what Faith has done, even though every other girl in the house told her she was to do it. There is a certain *noblesse*

oblige which would keep a girl who is supposed to be a lady from taking such a treacherous, such an ugly part. My dear, I hope you may live to be old; but I do hope, at the same time, that when you are very, very old, as I am, you will not be held up to ridicule, and by one to whom you have shown kindness. I am more anxious, I am more disturbed, I am more miserable about that part even than I am about the loss of my ring; for I feel, of course, that the ring will be found.'

'Yes, the ring will be found,' said Kathleen; 'I will make that *my* matter. There are a good many things that I cannot explain, but I can make your mind easy on that point. The ring will follow you to Court Abbey.'

'I shall be glad of it, my love. It was given to me, when I was young and—and—beautiful, by the one who loved me best on earth—by my dear, dear husband.'

Kathleen suddenly stood up. 'Mrs Mortimer,' she said, 'I want to say something more.'

'What is it, Kathleen?'

'Faith is very ill.'

'I am sorry. Whatever she did last night, she is a girl of very strong feelings, and doubtless she partly repents. Perhaps her illness is caused by that part-repentance of hers. If so, it has been sent to her by God; and I hope she will learn the lesson, and never, never turn into ridicule an old woman again.'

'She can't understand,' said poor Kathleen; 'she fails utterly to understand. She thinks that you wished it.'

'Now, Kathleen, we won't go into that subject.'

'She is pining to see you, Mrs Mortimer. It would make her much, much better if you would come to see her, even for a minute.'

Over Mrs Mortimer's face there swept an expression which Kathleen MacMahon had never seen there

before. She was quite silent for a minute. Then she said gravely:

'Tell Faith King from me that I will—in time—forgive her. It is wrong—very wrong—to treasure feelings of hatred or dislike towards any one, but it is only fair to add that my friendship for Faith King has altogether ceased. She is not the girl I took her for; in short, she does not belong to my set. Kathleen, I am proud; and those girls who belong to my set are dear to me. You are one, child; and so is Diana; and so is Jacqueline. But the others—for me they don't exist. I will endeavour, in the peace and calm of my own home, to forget that moment of intense humiliation. You can tell Faith so; and, please, dear, as you seem to know by some secret means how to get hold of the ring, do get it for me, for I want it very badly.'

'You shall have the ring safe enough,' said Kathleen. 'But—Faith—won't you send her any message?'

'I think not to-day. She will get over this nervous attack. Kathleen, I must ask you to leave me now. You can tell her when she is getting better that I will try and forgive her. You need not say any more unless you like. Of course the ring must be found, for it is of great value; but I do not for a single moment accuse Faith of having stolen it. Faith would not do that; there would be no necessity for it. Now leave me, my dear. Good-bye, Kathleen. You mean kindly. I am sorry for Faith King. I could have liked her. I never saw her as she really was until last night. The Faith King I thought so much about and almost loved vanished altogether last night, and the real Faith King—the cruel, unscrupulous girl—took her place. Good-bye, Kathleen. I cannot talk to you any longer.'

CHAPTER XIV.

TROUBLE ABOUT THE SIGNET-RING.

SOPHY thought herself in good luck. No one for a single moment expected the *dénouement* which had taken place. People were quite kind to her, she was enjoying herself vastly. She wished to keep away from Faith, and she did not care to talk to Diana. By-and-by Diana would have to do something for her, Sophy; but the time was not yet.

Sophy and her sisters were to spend the remainder of their holidays at Haredale; and Sophy expected, according to Diana's promise, to come back again for Easter. Faith was altogether humiliated. Old Mrs Mortimer was so angry with Faith that she was going away; and, best of all, Sophy kept the precious signet-ring safe in one of her drawers. Poor Faith, who had very nearly fainted on the stage, had dropped the ring just as the curtain fell, and Sophy, quick as thought, had picked it up. She did not mean, at the first moment at least, to steal it. But she meant to make use of it; it would be a valuable asset in her future life. It was necessary for her to hold a certain power over both Faith and Diana, and this ring would help her to such an enviable position. Accordingly, she was in the highest spirits.

The whole house was agog on the subject of Mrs Mortimer's signet-ring. Every place was being searched for it. Lady Ludlow and Sir Charles were both most unhappy with regard to it. Faith was too ill to care; and Mrs Mortimer herself, strange as it may seem, was thinking more of that broken ideal of her very old age than she was of the lost

ring. She felt sure she could get it back. Bowden was quite right when she said that never, never, day or night, did she remove it from her finger. But on that morning—the morning before the theatricals—she had taken it off and placed it on her dressing-table just before she went out. She was suffering from rheumatism, and when she put on her glove the ring pressed against her finger and hurt her. She had meant, of course, to put it on again; but, as a matter of fact, had forgotten all about it. She had not given the ring a single thought until she saw it on that personification of herself which appeared under the guise of Faith King in the last *tableau vivant.*

Then she remembered what had occurred. She had parted with the ring on that day for the first time for many years; and Faith, in order to make the resemblance complete, had put it on. Now the ring was lost; but Mrs Mortimer was the last person in the world to accuse a person unworthily. She was astonished, amazed, at what Faith had done; but she did not consider the girl a thief. The ring would be found.

Nevertheless, Haredale was now unbearable to the old lady, and she wanted the shelter and peace of her own home. She went away, accompanied by her faithful Bowden. Sir Charles and Lady Ludlow saw her off. They were very sorry for her; but the sort of thing which had occurred did not bear discussion, and they felt that it was best that they should part with their honoured guest in silence.

Meanwhile, however, Kathleen was busy. She had promised to nurse Faith during the daytime. She was a born nurse. Kathleen had lived the whole of her early days in a remote part of Ireland, where trained nurses were both rare and very expensive. Kathleen had nursed her own mother through a long and dangerous illness. She had all the fire

and fun and vivacity of an Irish girl; she had also a heart and a soul. She could be very gay at times, and very grave at others. There were two sides to Kathleen's character—the side which led her into innocent mischief (if any mischief can be called innocent), and the side which caused her to be extremely stern and determined towards those whom she considered to be in the wrong. She had all the quick intuition of an Irish girl.

Nora was very like her sister, but with a difference. She was neither so beautiful nor so gay. She adored Kathleen, and did exactly what the elder girl told her.

Now Kathleen went to Nora and whispered something in her ear. 'Nora,' she said, 'I have promised to stay with Faith during the greater part of to-day, and I want you to do something for me.'

'Yes, Kathy asthore,' replied Nora, looking up at her beloved sister with her bright blue eyes; 'and what may that be?'

'I want you to hold your own counsel, to begin with.'

'I am good at that,' said Nora, 'where you are concerned.'

Kathleen sat down close to Nora. 'Draw the others out all you can,' she said, 'with regard to the charades and the *tableaux vivants* of last night.'

'Oh, but I hate to think of them!' said Nora. 'That last quite horrible scene!'

'Never mind—never mind; there are some things one has to do that one doesn't like to do a bit, and they do one no end of good afterwards. Now, you can help me. You love me, don't you, Norrie?'

'Need you ask?' said Nora, giving her sister a look of adoration.

'I know it, old dear; we are all in all to each other —we have always been so. But there 's a very, very lonely girl in this house whom I want to help.'

Nora started a little. 'You surely don't mean that dreadful Faith King? I can't imagine, for my part, how you ever offered to nurse her; she did such a truly awful thing last night.'

'My dear Nora, she's not a dreadful girl. I like her very much, and so will you by-and-by; and it is because I want you to help me to clear her character that I want you to draw people out with regard to the *tableaux vivants*. Never mind the charades; they are less than nothing; they went very well, but they don't count. Talk to Diana, talk to Sophy, talk to anybody—*anybody*. Be your very brightest self; be Kathleen, for the time being. You know quite well, Norrie, that when I am not present you are thought a very witty Irish girl.'

Nora laughed and squeezed Kathleen's hand.

'Do your best,' continued Kathleen. 'You know what I want—all the information that is possible. In particular, watch Diana and Sophy. Oh, I can give you no special reasons; only watch them. I shall come into the schoolroom at tea-time; and if —if you have anything to tell me, I will go to my room for a minute or two afterwards. Goody has promised to look after Faith while I am having tea.'

This conversation was, of course, unheard by the other girls; but it caused Nora MacMahon a good deal of anxious thought. She was, as she owned herself, a weak replica of her sister. Kathleen's was the stronger character; but Nora was a very sweet girl, full of fun and daring and spirit—more particularly so, as Kathleen justly remarked, when she herself was not present.

There were two years between the sisters in age; and Nora, beside Kathleen, looked very young—little more than a child. The day was a gray one. The young actors were languid, tired after their considerable exertions of the day before, disinclined to do

anything, rather cross, and rather troublesome. Patty and Gerty came into the schoolroom a good deal, and were received with small favour—even by Jacqueline, who as a rule was very kind to her little sisters.

'Oh, do go back to the nursery, children!' she said. 'I think all our heads ache to-day.'

Patty began to whimper. 'Goody said we were to stay in here, because she is helping Kathleen to nurse Faith.'

Jacqueline gave an indignant motion of her eager little body. She was about to say something cross again when Nora suddenly sprang forward.

'Look here,' said Nora, 'who would like to listen to the story of an Irish bog?'

She spoke as no one had yet heard her speak in that house. She spoke with Kathleen's accent and a great deal of Kathleen's charm. Immediately the Chesterton girls (who were not going home until the next day) and all the rest of the young people crowded round her. Patty ensconced herself comfortably on Nora's knee, while Gerty found a footstool at her feet.

'Now, go on—go on!' she said.

Nora told her story with verve. It was the sort of tale which might be heard in any peasant's cabin in the south of Ireland. But Nora told it well. There were the mysteries of the bog: its treacherous appearance; its power of swallowing people up; the silence of its victim's death, and the hopelessness of his ever being found again. It was not a cheerful tale, but it effected its purpose. Nora described a girl whom she said she knew—a peasant girl—who, walking home through Kerry one wild night in winter, had asked some one to show her the very shortest way back to the old-fashioned, dirty town of Killarney. The person had suggested that she should go up a certain mountain which was not too steep, and thus escape two-thirds of the weary road.

The girl cheerfully ascended. But between that mountain and the next there was a little dip of soft, soft green moss—or rather grass—so green that it might well be called emerald; and on that grass the hapless girl had stepped, and—lo and behold!—she was in the midst of an Irish bog and was never heard of any more.

Patty almost screamed when the story came to a crisis—when Nora graphically described the search for the missing girl—when she told about the man who had recommended this short cut, but who had entirely forgotten the fact that there was a bog in a dip between the mountain's top and the next mountain which she was to cross.

There was a breathless silence in the schoolroom. All thoughts were turned away even from Mrs Mortimer and Faith. But while Nora was telling her story her eyes were busy enough. Sometimes they were fixed on Diana, whose face looked pale, and who seemed years older than she had done on the previous night; on Sophy too, who kept a good deal in the background, and did not speak much, nor ask many of her innumerable questions. Sophy as a rule would have laughed such a story to scorn, would have told Nora that she was altogether mistaken, that such a thing could not have happened, and that, in short, she was nothing better than an Irish girl who was inventing things for the amusement of her neighbours.

The little children did not much like the story; and Nora, observing this, changed the tone of her narrative into lighter and more attractive matter, making them now roar with laughter, in which laughter the elder girls were only too glad to join. But in the midst of the laughter, as also in the midst of the tragedy, both Diana and Sophy were strangely indifferent and silent.

Meanwhile Kathleen, in Faith's room, was doing

what she could to soothe the patient. When she came back after her fruitless visit to Mrs Mortimer, Faith's bright eyes were wide open and fixed on her face. As she entered the room Faith looked eagerly to see if some one was following her.

Kathleen came up quickly. 'Now, Faith,' she said, 'I have brought you a message from Mrs Mortimer. She cannot see you to-day. She is not—— Well, anyhow, she *cannot* see you; so you mustn't expect it. She—she was hurt last night; but she forgives you, Faith. Now, go to sleep; think no more about it.'

Faith flung herself round restlessly to the other side of her pillow. 'Oh, I am so hot!' she said—'so hot!'

The poor child was feeling too ill to greatly mind at that moment whether Mrs Mortimer forgave her or not. She lay for a long time with her eyes closed; and Kathleen, taking up a book, tried to read while her own thoughts were very busy. After an hour or so she looked round and saw that Faith was gazing at her.

'Kathleen,' said Faith, 'why do you sit by me to-day? Don't you want to have fun—to be with the others? You are not even a cousin. I don't think a great deal about cousins; I don't think a great deal about anybody. But why should you give up your time to me?'

'Well, you see, the fact is this,' said Kathleen MacMahon, 'I like you, and I think you are the victim of other people's malice. Now, please, don't get excited; just let me be good to you. I love being good to people. When my darling mother was ill—long, long ago in Ireland—I nursed her. I wouldn't have a trained nurse; I did it all myself with the help of old Bridget, our servant, and of Norrie now and then. She is a sweet girl, Faith.'

Faith's eyes looked interested. It was the first time a gleam of interest had come into them during

that weary day. 'Was your—your mother very ill, Kathleen?' she asked.

'Oh yes, Faith, of course.'

Faith paused for a long time before she asked the next question. 'I don't know anything whatever about you,' she said then, 'except that you are here. And I think you are truly kind—kind, as dear Mrs Mortimer was kind; kinder, perhaps, for you understand that I am not to blame, and she blames me.'

'She won't blame you long, Faithy dear. But she is a very old lady, and I am young; and when you are young—oh, you've got energy and enthusiasm.'

'Ah, is that true?'

'It is quite true. But you must not think now; the doctor says you are to stay quiet.'

'May I ask you one question, Kathleen?'

'Yes, provided you stay very still afterwards.'

'I will stay as still as possible after a few minutes, but I just *must* speak. You speak of having nursed your mother when she was very ill. Kathleen, did she—did she—*die?*'

Kathleen bent her head. A wave of colour came over her face. 'Yes, God took her; and God took my darling father too. Norrie and I are orphans.'

'Oh Kathleen, how brave you are!'

'In some ways, perhaps, I am,' said Kathleen. Then she added, 'It is because your dear mother died such a very short time ago, and because I know that you are fretting terribly for her, that I feel just as if I'd do anything for you, Faithy.'

'Would you really, Kathleen?'

'Yes, really, Faith.'

'Kathleen, do you know what I'd like best?'

'Have a sip of this nice cold lemonade, and then you can tell me.' Kathleen put her hand under the sick girl's head and gave her some lemonade to sip.

'What I'd like best of all,' said Faith, 'would be for God to let me get a little more ill than I am now

—ill enough to—to go back to mother, to join her again, to see her face, to hold her hand. I am just too sad and lonely. It was awful in the Rectory in London; but even that was nothing, nothing at all to the awfulness of this great, handsome house, and all those gay girls, and me not knowing how to do right and wishing all the time to do it. And then—and then—I think some of the girls dislike me, and I know I am not really very lovable. Nobody really interests me.'

'You have your father,' said Kathleen.

'Yes, I know; but daddy sent me here. Why did he?'

'He thought it would do you good, of course. What would not I give, Faith, to have a father! Oh, you don't know what my darling father was!'

'My father is the best of men,' said Faith; 'but he is—he is just devoted to good works, and—and—I can't help it—I sometimes think that perhaps if he had a little time to give me I might be happy. But he has sent me here to live with Aunt Margaret, and with Diana and Jacqueline; and it is all settled that I am to stay with them for some time.'

'And you are not happy?' said Kathleen.

'I am so fearfully unhappy I can scarcely bear it. I was fairly happy as long as Mrs Mortimer was good to me; but now—while I meant to please her, while I just hated taking that part (although, of course, I meant with all my heart and soul to please her by doing it)—I seem to have offended her most terribly.'

'She will get over it, Faith; she is far too noble not to, and you mustn't think about it any more. And as to wishing to die, it is very wrong indeed for any young girl to wish that; for God gives us our life to make use of—to spend for His glory. Why, Faith, the bare idea of your wishing to leave the world before your work is done is altogether too wrong!'

'Did *you* never feel it?' asked Faith.

Kathleen was silent for a minute. 'Yes,' she said then; 'yes, I have felt it. I felt it on the night when I kissed father as he lay in his coffin. He died three months after mother died. I missed him then—oh, so sorely! and I—I wanted to go. But I think God spoke to me and told me how wrong it was, and I never wished it since; so you must not either.'

'Kathleen, will you—it is a tremendous thing to ask—but will you be my—my friend?'

'I will, Faith; I will, most truly and sincerely, be your absolute friend.'

'Thank you—thank you! It makes me better to look at your sweet face—and your face, Kathleen, is both strong and sweet. Do you mind holding my hand for a minute or two? Perhaps I'll drop asleep; perhaps in the evening I'll be better.'

'Of course you will be much better,' said Kathleen. 'You'll be as well to-morrow as ever you were—or the next day at farthest. The doctor says you've just had a bit of a shock and must get over it. It needs courage to get over shocks; and you must exert yourself and put your courage to the proof, and do what is right in this matter.'

'And you will be my friend?' repeated Faith.

'I have said it,' answered Kathleen MacMahon.

CHAPTER XV.

FOUND.

AT four o'clock Goody took Kathleen's place in Faith's room. Faith had been sleeping for some hours. The look of intense suffering had left her face; a slight perspiration had broken out on her forehead; and the violent, feverish heat had considerably subsided. Kathleen knew that Faith was better, but was not at all sure how long this might continue.

Meanwhile she had other duties to perform. She had, by hook or crook, to get back the signet-ring. At tea-time the girls had, to a certain extent, got over their depression; they were all hungry, and the meal was good. Mrs Mortimer did not greatly affect any of the party personally, with the exception of Faith and perhaps Diana. Anyhow, she was gone. The catastrophe of last night was a thing of the past; and Faith, being really ill and in the hands of the doctor, could not be given the cold shoulder, as would certainly have been the case had she been well enough to be present.

Nora looked bright and excited; and when Kathleen came in the conversation became general, and there was a good deal of fun and laughter.

'It is good of you to nurse that girl,' said Jacqueline when tea was nearly over.

'What girl?' asked Kathleen, starting a little.

'You know who I mean: my cousin—although I am ashamed to call her my cousin—Faith King.'

'You needn't be a bit ashamed. She is better than most of us. I wouldn't say so if I didn't think it.'

'Kathleen! after last night?'

'Oh, do leave last night alone!'

'But the ring—the signet-ring is lost.'

'As to that,' said Kathleen, 'Mrs Mortimer, who really was hurt at Faith taking her off, doesn't for a single minute believe that she took the ring, poor child! Why should she? She has plenty of money of her own.'

'Well, it is exceedingly unpleasant, and father and mother think so,' said Jacqueline. 'I began by wanting to be specially kind to Faith. I liked her very much. Di never did. Now I see that Di is right, and that Faith isn't the sort of girl we ought to have much to do with.'

'Oh, really!' said Kathleen in a sarcastic voice. 'I am sorry for you—quite sorry. It seems a pity that she should inflict herself on you.'

'You're very unsympathetic,' said Jacqueline.

'I am very angry about a great many things,' replied Kathleen.

'Are you? Do you know any solution to this mystery?'

'If I did I wouldn't say—at least, not to you. Now, I have done tea and am going to my room.—Norrie, come along; I want you to brush my hair. I promised to go back to Faith and relieve Goody at six o'clock.'

Nora jumped up hastily. The two girls went to the charming room which they shared together. The first thing Kathleen did was to lock the door.

'Now, Norrie,' she said, 'what have you discovered?'

'Nothing much,' replied Nora, 'although I did my very level best. I told stories—Irish stories—till I was hoarse.'

'Well done you!' said Kathleen. 'You're a real little brick, Nora! But go on; you have something to say. When you *do* tell a story, you tell it in such a way that every one gets more or less fascinated. Were they all fascinated to-day?'

'I am afraid I rather frightened Patty and Gerty with my first story—it was about an Irish bog and that girl who disappeared in that dip in the mountains; but afterwards I told funny stories, and they all laughed—at least, nearly all.

'Who didn't laugh?' asked Kathleen.

'Well, Diana. She really is a stick, Kathleen, although she is beautiful. What a lovely Nausicaa she made! Every one says to-day that her tableau was the success of the evening. But she is a stick for all that.'

'She is not quite a stick,' said Kathleen. 'A stick would be harmless, and she is not.'

'Kathy! what do you mean?'

'Well, go on. She was not interested in the bog story?'

'No.'

'Did she laugh at the funny stories?'

'No; I don't think she was listening.'

'Was anybody else very inattentive?'

'Only that stupid, ugly Sophy Ross. She sat near Diana; and I really thought she was quite rude, for once or twice, while I was talking, she bent forward and whispered something to Di, and Di listened and seemed far more interested in what she was saying than in my most exciting tale.'

'Thank you, dear little Nora; you have done your best.'

'But I have done nothing; it is you who are the real heroine, but then you always were. How is Faith, Kathy?'

'Better; she will be all right in a day or two. You and I must be specially kind to her.'

'Of course we will,' said Nora.

'And not a scrap afraid of the others,' continued Kathleen; 'for the others will, if they can, send her to Coventry. Now, the darling is not to go to Coventry if we can keep her out.'

'Trust me,' said Nora.

'Well, that 's all right. Now,' said Kathleen, rising from the chair where Nora was brushing out her thick black locks and making them shine like ebony, 'I am going to have a little chat with one of my schoolfellows. You don't happen to know where Sophy is at the present moment?'

'I am sure she is in her room. She complained of headache before tea; and she got hold of a new book —a story-book—and that means that she has gone to her room to lie down.'

'That is all right,' said Kathleen. 'Now, Norrie, go back presently to the schoolroom and continue to be the heroine you have been all day, and—and—we 'll put these wrong things right.' Kathleen left the room, singing softly under her breath.

Her sister watched her exit. Then she said to herself in a tone of rapture, 'There 's nothing in the wide world I wouldn't do for Kathy! But what can she be up to now? And how is it possible to put so manifest a wrong right?'

As Kathleen was walking down the corridor towards Sophy's room she suddenly met Lady Ludlow. Lady Ludlow had been to see Faith. She no longer loved Faith—as a matter of fact, she almost disliked her for what had occurred on the previous night; but she was a conscientious woman, and would not have her own niece ill in her own house without paying her every necessary attention. She stopped Kathleen now when she saw her.

'You are good, my dear,' she said. 'I am told that you and poor old Goody are prepared to nurse Faith King until she is better.'

'If that is goodness, Lady Ludlow, then I suppose we are good; anyhow, we mean to do it. But please don't be anxious about Faith, for she is better already. She has gone through a severe shock, that is all.'

'She has given others a severe shock, my dear Kathleen.'

Kathleen was silent.

'To tell the truth,' said Lady Ludlow, 'I am exceedingly unhappy, not only at what occurred last night, but at the loss of the signet-ring. Dear, dear Mrs Mortimer made as little fuss about it as possible; she is the noblest woman I know. But my husband and I both feel that the entire house must be searched —and even the police called in if necessary—in order to get back so very valuable a possession. Dear Mrs Mortimer was insulted in my house, and by my niece; but that, in addition, she should have lost her ring is quite beyond bearing.'

'Give me a little time to look for it in my own way; perhaps I shall find it,' said Kathleen.

'You, my dear girl? But you have nothing to do with it.'

'I have nothing whatever to do with it, nor has Faith; nevertheless, before you go to extreme measures give me time to try and get the ring.'

'How much time do you want, dear? This is a serious matter. If, for instance, one of the servants has taken it, it may have been removed from the house already; in such a case, it will be extremely difficult to find it again. Of course the gold part of the ring is practically, except for its associations, like any other ring; but the diamonds are fine. If the ring was stolen by one of the servants, which is what I really fear, the diamonds would be removed and the ring lost for ever. Such a shock as losing a signet-ring given to her by her long-dead husband might even kill a lady of such advanced years as our dear Mrs Mortimer.'

'Give me till dinner-time,' said Kathleen.

'You are a wonderful girl, Kathleen.'

'No, I am not; but I want you, now that I have met you, to promise me something.'

'What is that?'

'You know that I am innocent?'

'Of course I do, my dear child.'

'And that Norrie is innocent?'

'Yes, yes, yes.'

'And Faith—dear Faith?'

'Well—yes; I don't think my niece would steal a ring.'

'Then, if I can get it back and put it absolutely into your hands, will you ask no questions *at all* with regard to how I obtained it—or how it got into my possession? What you want is the ring; you want to return the ring to Mrs Mortimer. If I can assure the person who I think has taken it that that person will not be publicly disgraced, I am almost sure to be able to get you the ring back. If by dinner-time to-night I fail I will send you a note, and you can take any steps in your power towards the recovery of the ring.'

'Very well, Kathleen; I trust you. I have always trusted you, my dear, and I have known you now for some time.'

'Thank you so very much, Lady Ludlow.'

Kathleen bent forward and in her usual impulsive way kissed Lady Ludlow on her forehead. That lady started back. She was not Irish; she was English—somewhat cold, somewhat reserved, somewhat like Diana in temperament. Nevertheless she almost wished at that moment that Kathleen were her own child.

Kathleen waited for a minute until Lady Ludlow disappeared. Then she tapped gently at Sophy's door. There was no answer. She stood still for a minute. The door was locked. She spoke, and her voice was imperious.

'Sophy, I know you are inside! Open the door and let me in!'

'Who's there?' called Sophy.

'You know quite well: Kathleen. You had better let me in for your own sake.'

There came a scrambling sound inside the chamber as though some one had just risen from her bed, and Sophy, all in *déshabillé*, her hair wildly scattered about her forehead, her face looking plainer than usual, appeared.

'Oh, it's you, Kathleen!' she said almost crossly. 'I really don't want to talk to any one now; I have a headache. Mayn't I have a little peace?'

'It seems to me,' said Kathleen, 'that charades and *tableaux vivants* have a very bad after-effect. However, a slight headache is nothing, and doubtless a little talk with me will clear yours off. Anyhow, I mean to have that talk, and you can't possibly get away from me.'

Sophy shrugged her shoulders, and Kathleen entered the room.

'You haven't offered me a chair,' said Kathleen; 'but I mean to sit down, for I am tired. I have been nursing dear little Faith to-day. You may be truly thankful, Sophy, and thankful to the end of your days, if Faith recovers from the cruel shock you gave her last night.'

'I! What did I do?'

'Don't ask me what you did: you know perfectly well.'

Sophy had the grace to blush and look down.

'I cannot for the life of me conceive why I've concealed your conduct all this time,' continued Kathleen, 'for I can assure you I have no love for you. You don't suit me a bit, and you never will; you know that quite well. You played up to Diana, and between you did an unworthy thing. Be that as it may, you are neither of you feeling too happy just now.'

'That is quite true,' said Sophy; 'in fact, I am downright miserable. I never supposed that the old lady would take it as she did.'

'But that is just what you did suppose, Sophy, or you wouldn't have done it. Diana meant you to do something, and she—she left it in your hands. *You* thought of this, and you did it. Very well, my dear; be that as it may, the thing is past. I think I—I should have told all that I knew but for the simple fact that I myself felt a little to blame, for I was the first person to put the idea in Diana's head of your helping her. However, we will let all this go by. Light will shine out of this darkness some day, somehow. I make no promise of absolute silence on this subject in the future. But there is a subject about which I want to talk to you: I want Mrs Mortimer's signet-ring back.'

'Kathleen!'

'Yes, I want it back,' said Kathleen. 'I know, just as surely as that I am sitting on this chair, that you have it in your possession. It is a very valuable old ring, and I may as well tell you that I have just met Lady Ludlow. Lady Ludlow is terribly hurt at what occurred last night, and is determined at least that the ring shall be returned to her dear old friend. If, therefore, Sophy, you don't give it back to me now the police will be summoned in the morning to search the entire house for the ring. If it is found anywhere in your possession you know what will happen to you: you will be branded as a thief, and will never be allowed to visit Haredale any more.'

Sophy's face was almost green with terror.

'But, on the other hand,' continued Kathleen, 'if you give me the ring back now, this instant—that ring which must have slipped from poor little Faith's finger when she nearly fainted on the stage last night—I have got Lady Ludlow to promise that she will not insist on knowing the name of the person who took the ring. She will be satisfied to have it back in order that she may return it to its rightful owner.'

'Oh, oh, oh!' said Sophy; and suddenly, without

Kathleen snatched it from her. 'Thank you,' she said.

P. B. PAGE 155.

the slightest warning, she began to cry. She cried long and heavily.

'I don't ask you to cheer up, Sophy; but I ask you to give me the ring. I know you have it. You cannot keep it, for I shall watch you. By dinner-time to-night Lady Ludlow is to have the ring in her possession. Give it to me now and I will take it to her at once.'

Sophy got up very shakily from her bed. 'That ring has been burning a hole in my heart,' she said. 'I am not rich like you, Kathleen, nor like Nora, nor like Faith, nor like the Ludlow girls; and I thought —I thought that I could sell it to—— Oh, never mind the reason! I *did* pick it up.'

'And you meant to *keep* it!' said Kathleen, her dark-gray eyes flashing.

'Well—yes, I did. You rich people don't understand the temptations of us poor folks.'

'Get it for me at once, Sophy—at once!'

Sophy went straight to the drawer where she had hidden the ring, put her hand into a little box where she kept her few valueless trinkets, and took it out.

Kathleen snatched it from her. 'Thank you,' she said.

'You faithfully, faithfully promise that no one is to know?'

'I keep my word. I never tell lies. Good-bye.'

Kathleen left the room, carrying the signet-ring with her.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CLEVER PROPOSAL.

HALF AN HOUR later Lady Ludlow, who happened to be lying down in her own luxurious room, heard a tap at her door. She said, 'Come in!' and Kathleen appeared.

'I have brought you the ring,' said Kathleen in a cheerful voice; and she dropped the signet-ring as she spoke on Lady Ludlow's knee.

The lady's face coloured. Her eyes brightened. She took up the ring, looked at it, and then those same beautiful eyes filled with tears. 'Why—Kathleen MacMahon,' she said, 'you are a little witch!'

'No, I am not,' said Kathleen; 'I am not a witch at all. I am just an everyday sort of girl; but on this occasion I happened to use my common-sense. You have got the ring back, have you not?'

'Why, yes, my dear—yes. My husband will be pleased; and I, of course, am immensely relieved. We will send this by registered post to-night to our dear old friend. Ah, Kathleen, how terribly she was hurt!'

'Yes,' said Kathleen, 'that was quite natural.'

'And to think that Faith should have done it!' continued Lady Ludlow.

Kathleen was silent for a minute. Then she said gravely, 'You remember, don't you, the faithful promise you made me not to ask me who took the ring?'

'Yes, my dear child; and of course I shall keep it.'

'Thank you,' said Kathleen. Then she added,

'Are you very, *very* tired, or may I talk to you for a little time with regard to Faith?'

'To be quite frank with you, Kathleen, I can scarcely bear to think of Faith at the present moment. You say she did not steal the ring; *that* I am quite prepared to believe—I do believe it.'

'Perhaps,' said Kathleen after a minute's pause, 'you will tell every one in the house that the ring is found; that there are circumstances in connection with it which you are not at liberty to reveal, but that Faith King is quite innocent—that, in short, whoever took this ring, she did not. Do you think you could do that for the sake of a very unhappy, a very lonely, and, at the present moment, a very ill girl—your own niece, too, Lady Ludlow?'

'You speak strongly, Kathleen; you speak without fear. I admire all courageous people. I only wish Faith were like you.'

'Faith and I are different,' said Kathleen. 'We have led different lives; but, at the same time, we have much in common. Lady Ludlow, you have known me now for several years.'

'I have, Kathy, and I have always admired you; in fact, I have loved you next to my own girls.'

'Loved me?' said Kathleen, her dark-gray eyes sparkling. 'Is that indeed true? One would do much—much for the person one loves.'

Here Kathleen dropped on her knees by the lady's sofa. She took one of Lady Ludlow's very slender white hands and pressed it between her own—so young, so warm, so vivid with youth and intense personality.

'Now,' said Kathleen, 'I don't feel at all afraid to say something to you, because, as you have told me that you care for me, you cannot fail to understand me. Nora and I have had many trials; but the fact is this—we have neither of us ever been tried as Faith, your niece, has been tried.'

'My dear girl, now you absolutely puzzle me. How has Faith been tried? I grant, of course, that she has lost her dear mother, and I know well that such a loss is irreparable — yes, quite irreparable. But you have lost your mother and your father, Kathleen.'

'Yes,' said Kathleen, speaking very gravely and lowering her long, curly black lashes.

'And you have got over their deaths, my love.'

'No,' said Kathleen.

'No?' repeated Lady Ludlow; 'and yet so bright a face, so sweet a way, so charming a manner!'

'Ah,' said Kathleen, 'some people can hide things—the deepest things, I mean—and some people cannot. I am one of those who can hide; Faith is one of those who cannot hide.'

'Again Faith — nothing but Faith,' said Lady Ludlow.

'Well, I want to explain to you that she is fretting most terribly—most terribly—for the loss of her mother, who was your very own sister. I want to tell you, also, that—although you will not believe me, for I cannot bring proof to bear on the subject—Faith was quite innocent in what she did last night.'

Lady Ludlow rose impatiently. 'Ah, there I cannot possibly believe you, Kathleen! I would, my dear, if I could; but seeing is believing. A girl who could deliberately borrow the clothes of a certain old lady in the house; who could borrow even her signet-ring; who could take-off her gestures, her stoop, her manners, to the life; a girl who had every opportunity of studying the old lady! To tell me she was innocent in the matter is to tell me not to believe my own eyesight.'

'Very well,' said Kathleen.

'I believe she did not take the ring; *that* I am prepared to believe. I told you I would, and I do; and I exonerate her to that extent. I think, after

doing it, she was frightened at her own action—that the poor child was overcome by intense remorse; and I think it highly probable that the ring *did* slip from her finger and was picked up by some one else. But more than that I cannot, and will not, believe; for seeing is believing. Even for your sake, Kathleen, I cannot go beyond that. Even if my own Diana were to say the words to me that you have just said I should make the same remark to her; even if my darling Jacqueline were to say such words I should still repeat, "Seeing is believing." We all know quite well what Faith King has done.'

Kathleen was silent for a few minutes. She felt sorely puzzled. To go back over that strange story—to tell Lady Ludlow about her own daughter, about Sophy — was impossible. Faith was unjustly suspected: she must bear it.

'You look wonderfully sorry for this girl,' said Lady Ludlow.

'Yes,' said Kathleen very slowly. 'But I have good news for you in one respect: she is better to-night; her fever is less; she will be all right in a day or two.'

'I am glad to hear that.' Lady Ludlow's voice was cold.

'May I stay for a few minutes longer? I have something else to say.'

'Certainly, my dear. But must you go on speaking about Faith?'

'Faith is the subject of conversation between us on the present occasion.'

'Well, my dear child, say what you wish to say.'

'You believe Faith to be quite innocent with regard to the ring, but you believe her to be guilty with regard to the impersonation of Mrs Mortimer?'

'You have put the case correctly, Kathleen.'

'And what *you* believe every one else in the house believes?'

'Yes, dear.'

Kathleen felt inclined to add, under her breath, 'Except three—three, *who know the truth.*' After a pause she said quietly, 'Faith has an extremely sensitive nature. How is she to be treated when she comes back to the schoolroom—when she returns to join your daughters, Diana and Jacqueline, in their daily life? Is this thing to be remembered against her, or is it to be forgotten? She is unhappy now. How will she feel if you all, more or less, send her to Coventry?'

'I hope I should never be unkind to my dead sister's child,' said Lady Ludlow, some asperity in her tone.

'But, dear Lady Ludlow, I think you *are* a little unkind; and remember that, even if you were just, do you think that every one else will be? We—Nora and I and the Ross girls—shall be here until the end of the Christmas holidays. Faith, if all goes well, will be back in the schoolroom in a day or two. How is she to be treated? She will be ill again if she is treated as though she really'——

'Now, stop all this, Kathleen! What is at the back of your mind? You would not talk as you are doing if you had not some thought—some thought with regard to my niece.'

'I don't think she will get on here,' said Kathleen. 'I was wondering very much if you would let her come to my school at Eastbourne. I would look after her there, and this story against her would not be known. I happen to know that Mrs Fennimore, our dear head-mistress, has a vacancy, and could take a girl of about Faith's age; and Norrie and I would both look after her and see that she had a good time. School-life might be the best thing for her.'

'But her father, my dear Kathleen, does not approve of schools; he has told me so several times. All the same, I honestly wish it could be done.'

'It would be much the best thing to do,' said Kathleen: 'the stimulus of the life, the novelty of it, the difference between anything that Faith has hitherto done and the life she would lead at school, would be for her benefit. Do you think her father would consent to her coming?'

'It would be a good idea,' said Lady Ludlow; 'but he is very determined on the point.'

'At the same time, you don't want her here now, do you?' said Kathleen.

'To be frank with you, I do not. And yet I invited her here; I was the one who did it; I asked her to come; I pressed it upon her father. She was to spend some years with Diana and Jacqueline and me, she was to be one of the family, and our dear Miss Price was to teach her. But, as you say—or, rather, as you do not say—circumstances alter cases. I wish she could go to school—I wish it most earnestly.'

'What sort of a man is Mr King?' asked Kathleen.

'A good, high-principled, but rather a severe, narrow-minded man, I fear.'

'Ah!' said Kathleen; 'but he is good?'

'Oh yes; he is very good.'

Kathleen sat quite still for a minute, thinking deeply. 'I wonder'—— she said then.

'What do you wonder, my dear child?'

'If *I* could persuade him to consent to Faith's coming to Mrs Fennimore's school. You see, it isn't a big school; it is select. There are only twenty girls in all, and we have a very good time; and if Faith came as my friend and Nora's friend her happiness would be more or less assured, and this miserable thing that has just happened might be forgotten.'

'It can never be forgotten,' said Lady Ludlow. 'And Faith would, of course, have to come here in the holidays, for her father stipulated on that point; he wanted her to spend the holidays with us, as he

said he was so busy he had no time to attend to her at home. Therefore you see for yourself that the moment she returns she will be unhappy again.'

'But she will grow strong and able to forget. A character like Faith's would be absolutely ruined by harsh treatment now, but by kindness it can be ennobled—it can be made great; and she is not an ordinary girl—she is above the ordinary.'

'You seem to think so very kindly of her, Kathleen, that I almost wish I could share your views. As a matter of fact, I was quite fond of the child until this happened.'

'I don't wonder you are shocked, Lady Ludlow,' said Kathleen; 'and I wish I could explain, but I can't.'

'Explain!' said Lady Ludlow with a start. 'Is there an explanation?'

'I wish I could explain,' were Kathleen's ambiguous words.

Lady Ludlow looked at her steadily.

'I should not be allowed,' continued Kathleen after a pause, 'to go to London alone; but do you think it would be too much if you and I went there together, saw Mr King, and got his consent to Faith's coming for at least a year to Mrs Fennimore's school?'

'You and I together?' said Lady Ludlow. 'You are a queer girl, Kathleen!'

'I am an Irish girl. And I would do the coaxing. Ah, I can coax as well as any one if I like!'

'You can, dear; you are quite an extraordinary child.'

'Not at all,' said Kathleen; 'I am just an ordinary, everyday girl. But I like to have justice done, and I want dear Faith to be happy.'

'There is one thing to be considered,' said Lady Ludlow. Kathleen waited quietly. 'Is Mr King to be told why I have suddenly so completely altered my plans with regard to Faith?'

'No indeed!' said Kathleen warmly. 'I hope you will not tell him. I hope that you will take me to London, and I trust that we may manage to see Mr King, and then I sincerely hope that you will leave the matter in my hands. I will simply say a few things to him without putting you the least in the wrong, and I almost think I shall win his consent to my scheme. Then there would be very little trouble in our going down to Eastbourne and arranging straightway with Mrs Fennimore.'

'Really, Kathleen, you are a very clever girl!'

'You will do it, won't you?' said Kathleen.

'Well, my love, I will talk to Sir Charles and let you know.'

'We could go to-morrow, couldn't we?' said Kathleen.

'To-morrow? That is very soon.'

'It isn't *too* soon. Goody will look after Faith to-morrow, and Nora will go and sit with her from time to time. All I want is that no one in this house, except Sir Charles, should know why you and I are having a little jaunt all by ourselves. Oh, it would be great fun! We shall be just one night away. Won't you agree?'

It was just at that moment that the door was opened and Sir Charles Ludlow came in. He was a tall, very handsome man, several years older than his wife. He was fond of Kathleen, who indeed was a favourite with all who knew her.

'Well, Kathy,' he said, 'I am glad you are with my wife. She has not been at all well since that horrid thing happened.'

'This clever Kathleen of ours has found the ring, Charles,' said Lady Ludlow.

'I say!' exclaimed Sir Charles. 'You discovered who stole it? It wasn't Faith King?'

'No, it wasn't. Here's the ring back; see for yourself.' Kathleen picked it up from where it still

lay in Lady Ludlow's lap and brought it to the baronet.

'That's a good thing!' he exclaimed, his brow clearing. 'And you say Faith is—is innocent of this, at least?'

'Quite innocent.'

'Charles,' said his wife, 'we will send the ring at once to dear Mrs Mortimer. And now I want to propound a scheme to you which this clever little Kathleen has suggested. She believes in Faith. She is blind, poor darling! for any one with eyes would know that Faith did what we all saw her do. At the same time, Kathy has, as regards other matters, a great clearness of vision, and perceives distinctly that Faith King will not be very happy at Haredale for the present. Kathleen, therefore, suggests that Faith should go to Eastbourne—to that very nice school where she and Nora are.'

'To Kendal House—to Mrs Fennimore's!' exclaimed Kathleen, her eyes sparkling. 'I want Faith to come to us for at least a year. I know there is one vacancy, and if we are quick about it Faith can have it. You don't object, do you, Sir Charles?'

'No, my dear girl, I don't object. I liked Faith very well until she behaved as she did last night. Of course I don't pretend to like her now; but she is my niece in a sort of way, and I cannot be unkind to her. I can quite see that she might be unhappy here for the present; and a school that has turned out a girl like you, Kathleen, and a girl like your sister Nora, must have something good in it.'

'Then if you consent, Charles,' said Lady Ludlow, 'Kathleen and I will go up to town to-morrow, see Mr King, and try to arrange the whole matter. Meanwhile, dear, please understand that it is not to be breathed in the household. No one is to know anything about it until the matter is finally arranged.'

'Mum's the word as far as I am concerned,' said

Sir Charles. 'But are you fit to go, Margaret? You look quite tired out, my dear.'

'Oh, it is nothing,' said Lady Ludlow. 'This dear girl has revived me already, and I own it will be a great relief to my mind to send Faith away for a time.'

A minute or two later Kathleen left the room. She did not say a word to any of her companions with regard to what was to happen on the following day, but in the solitude of her own room that night she told Nora that she was going to London early on the following morning with Lady Ludlow.

'You are so wise, Norrie,' she said, 'that I know quite well you won't repeat a syllable of all this to any one. They may know that I have gone to London, but that is all they must know; and when we come back there may be news, or there may not. What I want you to do is this, Norrie: be with Faith as much as you can to-morrow, and keep the others—those horrid creatures who suspect her—out of the way. Be cheerful with her, Norrie, and tell her some of your funny stories. Describe *Erin go bragh* ['Erin for ever'] to her. She won't be able to help laughing at your funny descriptions; for, you know, you are a darling, and you really are much funnier than I am.'

'Oh Kathy, there's nothing I wouldn't do for you!'

CHAPTER XVII.

MEETING THE RECTOR.

EARLY the next morning Lady Ludlow and Kathleen went quietly off to London. They were in the train at eight o'clock, and none of the girls saw them depart or had the least idea that they had gone.

Diana was feeling thoroughly miserable, and her one desire was to keep away from Sophy as much as possible. Sophy, on the other hand, although she had given up the ring (which, under existing circumstances, was a serious blow to her), by no means wished to let go her hold on Diana.

On the way to town Lady Ludlow turned to Kathleen and said, 'My dear, Sir Charles was talking to me last night about your scheme for Faith to go to Kendal House, and he seemed very anxious that Diana should also go there for at least a year—or perhaps two years. We cannot spare Jacqueline from home; but from all he has heard of the school, he thinks it would do Di great good to go there.'

Kathleen felt somewhat startled when Lady Ludlow made this announcement.

'Aren't you pleased, dear?' said her companion. 'Don't you like my darling, handsome, beautiful Diana?'

Kathleen was silent for a minute. Then she said slowly, 'I quite admit that Diana is very handsome; but I like—I like Faith best.'

'Still, of course, you cannot object to her going to Kendal House if Mrs Fennimore can take her in?'

'Of course I have no right to object,' said Kathleen rather sadly. She thought very deeply for a minute

or two. Then she added in a more cheerful tone, 'All right; perhaps it would be good for her to come, only I wish darling Jacky were coming as well.'

'That cannot be just yet, dear, for it would be so unkind to our dear Miss Price. But I tell you what, Kathleen. The fact that we are willing to send Diana will probably win the battle as far as Mr King is concerned.'

'I can't understand a girl like Faith having such a very severe father,' said Kathleen. 'Are we certain, dear Lady Ludlow, that we shall see him when we get to town?'

'Yes, I think so. I am going straight to the Savoy Hotel, and have sent a wire asking him to meet us there. Now, my dear Kathleen, I leave this extraordinary idea of yours in your own hands. You must work Mr King for all you are worth.'

'Trust me,' said Kathleen, smiling.

The pair arrived in London and were driven straight to the Savoy. Lady Ludlow had arranged that her brother-in-law was to meet her at the Savoy at twelve o'clock for lunch. She and Kathleen had not long entered the hotel before the Reverend Leonard King was announced. He came in quickly, wearing his old, somewhat shabby dress, walking with that slight stoop which was habitual to him, and looking straight before him with dreamy, unobservant eyes. For a moment he thought that Kathleen was Faith. When he saw his mistake he drew back stiffly and waited for Lady Ludlow's introduction.

'My young friend, Kathleen MacMahon. It is very good of you, Rector, to give us a little of your time.'

'I am very much pressed now,' said the Rector. 'I suppose our business together won't take very long?'

'I hope not; but you would like some lunch first of all?'

'Thank you, I think not. I make a rule of never

eating anything in the middle of the day. If I may have a talk with you at once, perhaps you and this young lady'—he bowed to Kathleen—'could have your lunch later on?'

'Just as you please, Leonard. You were always a very strange man.'

Meanwhile Kathleen, with her bright eyes, was casting quick glances at Faith's father. He had a look of Faith, and yet there was a great difference between them. There were moments, however, when Faith's young face wore that look almost of asperity which was so marked on the features of the Rector of St Peter's.

He sat down now impatiently, evidently waiting for Lady Ludlow to speak.

'As a matter of fact,' she began, 'the business which has brought me to town lies between you and this child.'

'I fail to understand,' said Mr King, giving Kathleen a quick, short-sighted glance.

'It does, all the same. I will leave you both to talk it over together.' As Lady Ludlow spoke she got up and left the room.

Kathleen now drew her chair close to the one where Mr King was seated. He had taken out his glasses and put them on to enable him to see her more clearly. She had the sort of face which won the goodwill of all who glanced at her: it was so young, so fresh, so fragrant, so full of truth and sincerity; there was such a beautiful, open expression in her wide gray eyes.

'You will be quick, my dear young lady,' said the Rector. 'I can see that you are a person of intelligence; and of course you must have something important to say to me, or you and Lady Ludlow would not have sent for me to meet you here. But my time is really very valuable.'

'I won't keep you any time at all,' said Kathleen.

'I can tell you right out, as bluntly as possible, what I have come here to say.'

'Yes, my dear, of course. *Do* speak; I am all attention. I assure you minutes are of great value.'

'Of course they are,' said Kathleen; 'I always think that myself.'

'Do you indeed?'

'I have met,' said Kathleen, 'your daughter Faith. By the way, I noticed that you never even asked how she was.'

'Faith!' said the Rector. 'Dear, good little Faith! No; I did not specially ask, because I felt certain that if there happened to be bad news I should hear of it.'

'Sometimes even the wisest of us are wrong,' said Kathleen; 'for, as far as Faith is concerned, there *is* bad news.'

Over the Rector's severe face there passed a quick spasm of pain. 'Why—what?' he said. 'What—is the child—is the child—— Tell me quickly, Miss MacMahon!'

'She has been ill; but she will be better again soon. She is not very happy.'

'Ah, poor child! She takes after me. Now, her mother was quite a different sort of person.'

'You can't blame your only daughter for taking after you, can you, sir?'

'No, I can not; but it is a trying disposition to have.'

'It is, very. Now, I happen to be staying at the present moment at Haredale, and I am a great friend —an old friend—of Diana and of Jacqueline. You know who I mean?'

'I confess I don't.'

'Well, sir, they are Lady Ludlow's daughters—they are Faith's first cousins.'

'Yes—I see now—I see now. Diana and Jacqueline —quite good names, quite good. I was relieved when my sister-in-law offered to take Faith. What is the meaning of this interview? In short, what are you

leading up to, Miss MacMahon—if I may ask the question?'

'Faith is not happy.'

'Oh—you want to make her happy? Well, do so, my dear young lady; I am sure I have not the slightest objection. I should like her to be happy, and genial, and good-tempered, and womanly, and sensible, so that by-and-by she may be a help to me —which I know, poor child! she earnestly wishes to be; I should like her to be influenced by true religion, so that she may really assist me in my work amongst God's poor. Those are my aims for Faith. After her mother's death I was obliged to leave her too much alone, and Lady Ludlow's offer seemed very opportune. And yet you say she is not happy? I cannot possibly have her home again, if that is what you are meaning; for she would be far more unhappy in the old Rectory. I am more absorbed than I ever was: the work is heavier, the time is shorter, the poor are poorer, the burden—the burden of life grows greater. I cannot possibly have Faith home now; so don't ask that, Miss MacMahon.'

'I don't, sir; of course I don't. But what I *do* ask is this—that you will let her come to the very happy school where I am taught, at Eastbourne, for at least a year.'

'Oh, I disapprove of schools for girls, and so, I know, do the Ludlows. You, my dear Miss MacMahon, are the most charming specimen of a schoolgirl, if you will permit me to say so; but I don't care for the typical schoolgirl, and one reason why I so gladly accepted Lady Ludlow's invitation was that Faith was to be educated with her own daughters.'

'Yes, I can quite understand that. But Faith is not well, although there is nothing to be alarmed at in her condition; and she won't be quite happy for the present at Haredale. Things have happened there which I am not permitted to tell you.'

'Things have happened?' said the Rector, his eyes flashing fire. 'Have people been unkind to my child?'

'Not Lady Ludlow—oh no, no! But—*some* people have been unkind to Faith.'

'Poor, poor little girl! And you can't tell me?'

'On my honour, I can't.'

'And you think, Miss MacMahon, that my child—my dear wife's child and mine—would be really happy at your school? Where is your school, my dear?'

'At Eastbourne, sir: a quite ideal school, with such a splendid mistress. And, to make all quite sure, Faith would go to the school as my friend and as Nora's friend; and—although, perhaps, she ought to tell you herself—Lady Ludlow is most anxious to send one of her own daughters there also.'

'Then have it your own way: let her go—let her go. I don't know anything about the expenses; but there's plenty of money. I will see Lady Ludlow and arrange the matter with her at once.'

'Oh, thank you a thousand times! You are good!'

'No, my dear, I am not. I am anything but good; but I am a sadly overworked man, and I miss my dear wife—morning, noon, and night. You will promise me, Miss MacMahon, not to do anything to render Faith worldly or unfit for her position as a Rector's daughter by-and-by?'

'I think I can promise that she won't be spoilt,' said Kathleen.

'Well, then, my dear, if that is your mission it is accomplished. I will just say a word or two to Lady Ludlow. You will leave us, won't you, for you can well understand that I am a very busy man?' The Rector took out his heavy gold watch as he spoke.

Kathleen ran out of the room. She found Lady Ludlow in one adjoining.

'It is all right,' she said; 'he consents. Don't ask

him why. Poor darling Faith! I wish she had a father who had more life and go in him. But—but now, Lady Ludlow, he wants to see you. I just mentioned that Di was going too, but I hardly think he took it in. He didn't even know, at first, that there was a Diana in the world.'

'He is the queerest of men,' said Lady Ludlow. 'But if you have got his consent, all will be well.'

'Do go to him, please,' said Kathleen; 'for he really is in such a frightful hurry that I believe he will leave the hotel if you delay a single moment.'

Lady Ludlow laughed and rose to her feet. She and her brother-in-law had a very short conversation, which related mainly to ways and means.

'I don't approve of schools,' he said; 'but then, neither do you.'

'There are schools and schools,' said Lady Ludlow.

'I am sorry to hear from that nice girl, Miss MacMahon, that Faith is not happy.'

'We think she will be happier at school,' said Lady Ludlow in a guarded tone.

'Well, send her by all means.'

'To prove to you how thoroughly I am in sympathy with that special school, I want Diana, my own eldest girl, to accompany her, Leonard.'

'Just as you please about that,' said the Reverend Leonard King. 'I think that is about all?' he continued.

'Yes, that is about all.'

'As far as money is concerned, you will apply to Faith's solicitors; they have all her money in their hands, and nothing need be spared with regard to her school-outfit or anything else. I promised the child that she should spend one week in each year with me, and I mean to stick to my word. She can come to me, perhaps, at Easter, if she likes; it will not be so hot in London then.'

'I should be very glad indeed if you would have

her at Easter; that is an excellent idea,' said Lady Ludlow with a sigh of relief.

'Well, let it be so: Easter, then. Good-bye, Margaret. Give my love to Faith; tell her I don't forget her, and that I specially remember her in church on Sundays both at morning and evening prayers.' The Rector took up his hat and made a hasty departure.

Kathleen and Lady Ludlow partook of an excellent lunch. They confessed that they were both relieved at the way in which the Rector yielded to Kathleen's proposition.

'However did you manage it, my dear?' said Lady Ludlow.

'I didn't manage it at all,' said Kathleen. 'I simply said what I thought, and I think he was in such a feverish hurry to get away to a mothers' meeting or something of the kind that he said "Yes."'

'Oh, you mustn't judge him hardly, Kathleen. He is a good man.'

'Oh, an excellent man, I have no doubt; but it would take a long time to understand him.'

'My dear, dear sister understood him and loved him most passionately.'

Kathleen was silent.

Mrs Fennimore was expecting the two ladies, and soon after lunch they drove to Victoria Station and took a train to Eastbourne.

Although it was contrary to Mrs Fennimore's custom to have more than twenty girls in her establishment, yet the pleasure and delight of receiving so distinguished a young girl as Diana Ludlow was too much for her prudence, and she decided that both Faith and Diana should join the school at the end of the Christmas holidays.

'I can give them rooms close together, as they are first cousins,' said Mrs Fennimore.

But Kathleen interposed. 'I want to make a

suggestion,' she said. 'You know that Nora and I have separate rooms and that they communicate?'

'Yes, I do, my dear.'

'Well, I was greatly wondering if—at any rate for the first term—you would give Faith Nora's room, and give Diana and Nora rooms close together.'

Lady Ludlow looked with some wonder at Kathleen.

Mrs Fennimore gave the girl a penetrating glance. After a time she took Kathleen alone into her private sitting-room. The ladies were waiting for a return train to London.

'Kathleen,' said Mrs Fennimore, 'there is more in all this than meets the eye.'

'There is,' said Kathleen at once.

'And you won't trust me, my dear child?'

'I would indeed, most truly, if I could; and you don't suppose that I am not sorry to part from my darling Norrie? But I think Norrie will be useful to Diana, and I feel sure that I shall be useful to Faith.'

Mrs Fennimore was silent for a minute. 'I don't know anything whatever about Faith King,' she said. 'But of course we know the Ludlows; they are most distinguished people.'

'And Diana is a most distinguished-looking girl, Mrs Fennimore.'

'And is she not distinguished for more than looks, dear?'

'You must find that out for yourself. I have only one—one request to make of you, and I make that in the deepest secrecy: Keep Diana and Sophy Ross as far apart as you can.'

'The Rosses are staying at present at Haredale, are they not?'

'They are.'

'In the usual school routine it will be impossible for me to interfere,' said Mrs Fennimore.

'Dear Mrs Fennimore, where can you *not* inter-

fere? You know what you have done for Norrie and me.'

'God bless you, Kathleen!' said Mrs Fennimore. 'I will do my best. I see you are worried, notwithstanding your cheerful manner; and I will certainly be on your side, dear.'

'Thank you—thank you! I knew you would. Now, I want you to be specially, most specially kind to dear little Faith King.'

'And why kinder to her, my love, than to the other new girl, Diana Ludlow?'

'Don't you remember,' said Kathleen, 'how very, very sad Nora and I were when we came to you? That was because we had lost our father and mother. Well, dear Faith, who is Lady Ludlow's niece, has just lost her most splendid mother, and she frets about her a great deal. But Diana'——

'Yes, dear? You have a sort of reserve in your voice when you speak about Diana.'

'I don't think Diana is too happy,' said Kathleen; 'and I am quite sure of one thing—that the less she sees of Sophy Ross the better. But although Diana is the daughter of Sir Charles Ludlow, and although she possesses great beauty and will hold a high position in the world of fashion, she does not come so close to my heart as does dear Faith. So I want you, for my sake, to be specially kind to Faith.'

'Kathleen, my dear, I will—I certainly will. I trust you and Nora more than any other girls in the school. You have never deceived me yet, and I do not think you ever will. There is a mystery attached to this arrangement which I am not to hear?'

'I am afraid you must not hear of it. But never mind; you are doing a very good turn when you admit Faith King and Diana Ludlow to Kendal House.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

TELLING THE NEWS.

LADY LUDLOW and Kathleen returned to Haredale in the early afternoon of the following day. Kathleen went straight to Faith's room. Faith was better; all the feverish symptoms had subsided. She was sitting up in bed, supported by pillows; her face was very pale; her eyes looked dark, sad, and dreamy. Nora was seated by her bedside.

Nora jumped up as her sister hurriedly entered the room. 'Oh, you dear! God bless you, Kathleen! So you are back—you are back? I am delighted!'

'And how is Faith?' said Kathleen, speaking in her very brightest manner, and bending forward as she spoke to kiss the young girl.

'I think I am quite well,' said Faith.

'No, she is not,' said Nora. 'The doctor was here this morning and said that she must stay perfectly quiet for some little time—in short, that she is not to go back to the schoolroom for two or three days. To-morrow she may be allowed to sit up for a little, but she is to stay in bed to-day.'

'I hate staying in bed,' said Faith.

'Oh Faith, and I *did* try to amuse you!' said Nora.

'Yes, you were quite splendid, Nora,' answered Faith. She looked wistfully at Kathleen as she spoke.

'Well, I tell you what it is,' said Kathleen. 'I am going off to my room to remove my hat and jacket and get a bit tidy; then I am coming back to Faith. And if you are the angel I always imagine you to be, Nora, you will go to Goody and persuade her to bring tea for two in here. Then you can go back to

the schoolroom, or to wherever the other girls are, and have a bit of fun.'

'Might not there be tea for three?' said Nora. 'I don't find the schoolroom so very agreeable.'

'You had best go,' said Kathleen. 'You shall come in later on. The fact is, I want to have a nice little chat all by myself with Faithy here.'

Nora, who was always as wax in her sister's hands, complied at once. Kathleen went off to wash and get tidy after her journey, and when she returned to Faith's pretty room she saw Goody there arranging a very tempting tea for two.

'Well, Miss Kathleen dear,' she said, 'it is I that am right glad to see you back, although no one could possibly have been kinder to dear little Miss Faith than your sister has been. But whenever we get you into the house we want you to stay, and that's a fact.'

'You're just a darling, Goody!' said Kathleen. 'And how are the children—your own special pets?'

'Oh, bless them! say I,' was Goody's rejoinder; 'they're as well and happy as children can be, but I think they miss you and Miss Nora. You see, Miss Nora spent most of yesterday in Miss Faith's room, and for some reason both Miss Diana and Miss Jacqueline have been rather cross to the children—the dear lambs!—the last day or two. I can't make it out, for my part, for sweeter children never breathed.'

'Oh, it's a mood—nothing but a mood, Goody, and it will pass,' said Kathleen. 'What a delicious tea you have given us—muffins and those dear little hot cakes! Won't Faith and I have a feast!'

'I wish we could get Miss Faith to eat; but she has scarcely touched any food up to the present, although the doctor says she wants a lot of nourishment.'

'She is all right; we mustn't fret about her,' said Kathleen in her cheerful voice.

Goody left the room. As soon as ever the door

was closed behind her, Kathleen busied herself in preparing a tempting tea for Faith.

'Now, Faith,' she said, 'I've got the most splendid bit of news for you; but I vow and declare I will not tell it unless you make a good tea—no, not one scrap of it shall reach your ears unless you make a first-rate tea. So just buckle to, my love; for, after all, when a person has had a nervous shock the best thing in the world is to feed the poor nerves, and your nerves want feeding.'

'I've missed you ever so much,' said Faith, 'although Nora has been nice.'

'Nice!' cried Kathleen. 'I should think she has! She is the sweetest and best of girls.'

'I don't love her quite as much as I love you, all the same,' answered Faith.

'Well, my dear, I can't help you if you don't. Now, then, how about this?'

Kathleen had prepared a very tempting piece of buttered toast and a delicious cup of tea, which she placed on Faith's bed.

'Eat—eat!' she said; 'and then drink—drink! Not one word shall you get out of me unless you finish all that toast and have another piece, as well as a second cup of tea.'

'Why, Kathleen,' said Faith, 'you *do* look bright and excited!'

'And so I ought to be, for I have scored a tremendous victory.'

Faith felt herself roused out of her despondent state by Kathleen's bright manner. She became absolutely curious to hear that news which was to do her good and cause her to forget herself. She looked at Kathleen, and observed that, notwithstanding its beautiful shape, the Irish girl's mouth was firm with determination. What would *she* not give for such strength of character? Oh yes, Nora was very well; Nora was a darling girl, but she was not like

Kathleen. And all the weary time during Kathleen's absence Faith had not once seen either Diana or Jacqueline; in fact, she had been left altogether to the tender mercies of Nora MacMahon and dear old Goody.

At last the meal came to an end. Kathleen herself was very hungry, and ate plentifully of the good things provided. The tea-tray was removed, and the two girls were alone.

'Now,' said Kathleen, bending forward and taking one of Faith's small hands in hers, 'you have earned the right to hear my news.'

'Oh, please—please tell me!' said Faith.

'I went to London yesterday with your aunt, Lady Ludlow.'

'I know; Nora told me, I think rather reluctantly. Kathleen dear, I hate London—I mean now; it is such a great, enormous, desolate, empty, lonely place.'

'Well, darling, I didn't stay away very long.'

Faith was silent.

'Don't you want to know what I went about?'

'If you like to tell me,' said Faith.

'I have come here for the express purpose of telling you. Now, you must stay quiet and not get overflushed or excited or feverish. You know, of course, that the signet-ring was found?'

'Oh yes, I know that.'

'And that you, as far as the signet-ring is concerned, are quite exonerated?'

'Yes, I know that also,' said Faith, sighing a little wearily.

'But just at present, dear, darling Faith, there are circumstances which make it difficult for your aunt—and, in consequence, for other people here—to be quite clear of the belief that you did not purposely take-off the character of dear Mrs Mortimer.'

'I only did it by her wish—by her express wish,' said Faith. 'Sophy was the one who put the idea into my head.'

'Well, yes; but of course you understand that Sophy had her own object in view when she did that?'

'I have been thinking so since, but it seems almost impossible to believe.'

'Well, Faith, it is like this: if you and I, darling, were to tell all we know we should get poor, wretched Sophy into the most frightful trouble. I don't like Sophy. I don't pretend to like her. She is my schoolfellow, but that doesn't matter. I shall never like her. But, at the same time, I hope I may win her round to better things and a more worthy life by other means than by telling of her now. I think, Faith, if you are very noble and will help me to keep the secret you will be doing a fine thing. I want you to promise that.'

'Very well, I will,' said Faith wearily. 'I never wanted to come here,' she continued, 'and now I am most utterly miserable. But I am glad I have met you; and I love dear, dear Mrs Mortimer—although, of course, if she really thinks that I was caricaturing her that night she can never forgive me.'

'She will forgive you some day, Faith. And now, please, let us turn all our attention to another matter.'

'What is that?'

'I don't think, when Nora and I leave here, that you, poor little Faith! will be very happy.'

'I have been dreading it more than words can say,' answered Faith. 'I have been thinking about it so much that it has kept me awake at night. I have had dreadful dreams of being here, all alone, with Jacqueline angry—and I *did* love Jacqueline; and Diana, whom I could never understand, even more angry; and Aunt Margaret angry. And I all the time really innocent!'

'Well, that trial will not be laid upon you, dear Faith.'

'Will not be laid upon me!' said Faith. 'What do you mean?'

'Guess whom I saw yesterday?'

'Whom you saw!' Faith's eyes grew bright and the colour rose to her cheeks.

'I saw no less a person than that very grave and good man, the Reverend Leonard King.'

'My father—my dear, lonely father!' said poor Faith, and tears filled her eyes.

'I assure you, Faithy dear, he is not lonely. He is too busy with his work to be lonely.'

'But how did he look, Kathleen? Did he look thinner and paler than ever? And were his clothes very, very shabby?'

'Well, you see, darling, I never saw him before, so I can't make comparisons between how he looked when you were with him and how he looks now; but he seemed quite well and very active, and he was very busy. I told him about you.'

'About me! Oh, what did you say?'

'Well, I said I rather guessed that you were not too happy.'

'Oh Kathleen! Dear father—the idea of troubling him about a little insignificant girl like me!'

'Well, you see, my love, I don't quite agree with you about your being so insignificant; but I made a proposal to him, and—thank goodness!—he was highly pleased to fall in with it.'

'And what was that?' asked Faith, great eagerness in her tone.

'It was this: I asked him if he would let you return to school with Nora and me at the end of the Christmas holidays. You know I have described our school to you, and I think you will be quite happy there. Lady Ludlow thinks it will be a very good thing for you, and she has arranged to send Diana also; and your father has consented. In short, you are to come; for after Lady Ludlow and I had an interview with your father we did not let the grass grow under our feet, but went straight down to

Eastbourne and saw that most beloved of all women, Mrs Fennimore, and she arranged that you and Di should both join the school. And you, little Faith asthore, are to have a room leading out of mine, and you are to be under my wing, so that you needn't have any fear. Now, what do you think of that?'

'Oh!' said Faith. She was quite silent for a minute or two. Then she said slowly, 'And will the girls at the school—the other girls—know that I—I was so cruel—although I never meant to be cruel—as to caricature dear Mrs Mortimer?'

'I rather guess they won't know,' said Kathleen; 'and it's just because they sha'n't know that I am carrying you off to school to give you a chance, Faithy, and to show you what real, jolly, free, delightful life is.'

'Oh, you are splendid!' said Faith. 'Then I think I shall be happy. I can't describe to you how I have dreaded going back to the schoolroom.'

'You will come back to the schoolroom, of course, in a day or two. But I doubt if any girl will dare allude to the subject; for I shall be present, and so will Norrie. And, remember, you will be our special friend.'

'Kathleen, I do love you!' said Faith.

'And I love you,' said Kathleen. 'And now that I have told you my news, and that you have nothing to fear, I want you to get well as soon as possible; so I am going to take your pillows away and make you lie down flat and go to sleep for a little, for I have a visit to pay in the schoolroom.'

'Darling, darling Kathleen!' said Faith.

Kathleen arranged Faith's bed comfortably. The little pale face looked very pathetic as it rested on its pillows; but there was an expression of intense relief in the eyes, and the look of love in them as they fixed themselves on Kathleen was quite reward enough for the warm-hearted Irish girl.

'I will send Norrie to sit with you in a minute or two,' she said. 'And now, just go off to sleep, won't you?'

'Yes, I will—I will. I am greatly relieved—greatly relieved.'

Kathleen left the room. She found her sister wandering restlessly about in the corridor outside. 'Come here, Nora,' she said.

Nora ran up to her at once. 'They are all positively hateful about Faith,' she began, 'and I can't stop them. Diana and Sophy are the worst; but really there isn't a girl in the house who doesn't say the most odious things about poor Faith.'

'I think I shall manage to stop their tongues,' said Kathleen. 'Now, I have a bit of news for you. I didn't tell you why I was going to London.'

'No,' said Nora, 'and of course I promised to trust you; but I really did think it was extremely injudicious of you to go away when you did, for it seemed that your absence set all their tongues wagging. It was perfectly horrid the way the girls spoke.'

'Well, never mind all that,' said Kathleen. 'I have good news now, at least. I went to town with Lady Ludlow in order to see Faith's father, Mr King—a dear, ancient-looking sort of divine; very, very much the old-fashioned clergyman; and, I am sure, as good as gold—if not better. But he is so absorbed in his work that a girl like Faith would be absolutely forgotten in his house, so she can't possibly go back to him.'

'Oh, of course not,' said Nora. 'Did any one think she could?'

'Nor can she stay here,' continued Kathleen.

'I was thinking that myself,' said Nora; 'but then, where is she to go?'

Kathleen could not help giving a little jump and clapped her hands gleefully. 'It's arranged—it is all arranged, Norrie! She comes back with you and

me to dear Kendal House—to the care of our sweet, beloved Mrs Fennimore, who will just manage her in the very way she ought to be managed. But, Nora, don't be too eager; for there's one little thing which I am afraid may annoy you, only you are just so splendidly plucky.'

'I am delighted she is coming,' said Nora. 'It is the most splendid scheme. But what can annoy me about it?'

'Well, it is this. It isn't a great deal, and yet it is something. To my grief and distress—although I could not possibly interfere—Lady Ludlow has determined that Diana shall also go to the same school.'

'Diana!' said Nora, her face turning rather white.

'Yes. Now, look here, Norrie. I must take charge of Faith, and you must take charge of Diana, and, between us, we must keep Diana and Faith quite away from that odious girl Sophy Ross.'

'Oh, I am willing enough,' said Nora. 'You can't dislike Sophy more than I dislike her.'

'The only possible way to effect that is for us to change rooms, dear Nora.'

'Change rooms!' said Nora. Her face became a little troubled.

'Well, yes; there's nothing so very awful in that. But it's in this way. You and I had two very nice rooms communicating. I want you to give up your room to Faith so that neither Diana nor Sophy can worry her in her bedroom; and I want you to have another room which will communicate with Diana's. Mrs Fennimore has promised to do this, and I am sure you are the last person to grumble.'

'It is a bit of a trial, but I will do it for you,' said Nora.

'I said you were a brick of all bricks, didn't I?' said Kathleen, bending forward to kiss her sister. 'But there, I mustn't add any more. Go and sit with Faith; she is as relieved as ever she can be. I want

to go into the schoolroom—or, rather, I want to talk to that charming Sophy and that beloved Diana Ludlow.'

'If I were you,' said Nora, 'I'd just send for those two and have it out with them in your own bedroom.'

Kathleen considered for a minute. 'That is an excellent idea,' she said. 'And now, Norrie, as you really are the heroine of the hour, please tell the two of them to come and see me for a minute in my room. Then you can go and sit with Faith.'

Nora ran off with a smile. 'I shall enjoy that,' she said.

Kathleen went to her room. There was a bright fire burning in the grate. The windows were open, for although it was only early in January, the weather was very balmy for the time of year. Kathleen stood for a few minutes at a window and looked out. She wondered much how those who possessed such rich abundance of the good things of life could deliberately lay themselves out to make others unhappy. The whole idea was foreign to her nature; but now she was fighting for one who had been unjustly treated, and she would fight to the end.

Presently she heard steps coming along the corridor. Diana Ludlow and Sophy Ross tapped at the door and entered immediately. They made a striking contrast: the tall, very slender, erect figure of Diana could not but impress any one with a sense of nobility.

Kathleen looked at her very sadly. 'She is not all bad,' she said to herself; 'it is that horrid, horrid little Sophy. I wish—oh, how I wish that I had never made that mad, passionate suggestion to Diana with regard to Sophy! But I did it, and when the time comes for all these horrid mysteries to be cleared up I shall take my share of the blame.'

Sophy, who was certainly remarkably plain, undersized, very pale and freckled, with rather small greeny-gray eyes, was the last sort of girl any one would

expect to influence others. Nevertheless it was quite manifest at the present moment that Diana stood in awe of her.

'You have sent for us, Kathleen,' said Diana. 'Nora brought us an urgent message. Is there anything the matter?'

'I thought you would like to hear the news,' said Kathleen.

'Would you oblige me very much by shutting the window?' said Diana. 'It is getting towards evening and the air is chilly, although you have a bright fire.'

'I will certainly oblige you,' replied Kathleen; and she closed the window at once.

Sophy did not say anything. She went and stood near the fire, holding out her hands to the blaze and giving furtive glances now and again at Diana.

'I dare say your mother has told you, Di'——

'Told me what?' said Diana.

'Well, if she hasn't, she will the next time she sees you. Anyhow, it is settled. You are coming to school with me and with Nora on the twelfth of January.'

'I—coming to school!' exclaimed Diana. 'What do you mean?' Her face grew first very red and then very white.

'A fact, my dear—a fact; and you are really in great luck. It's an awfully nice school, and you'll have twice the fun you have at home. Anyhow, your father and mother wish it, and of course they will tell you about it. I only venture to be first with the news because I have something else to say—something to say to you both.'

'Yes!' said Sophy, turning swiftly round and giving another furtive glance, first at Diana and then at Kathleen.

'It is this. A very disgraceful thing occurred here on the last night of the old year. I have resolved to keep the secret which you, Diana, and you, Sophy, know quite well. I feel myself partly to blame in

'I will be down on you with the truth.'

P. R. PAGE 187.

the matter; and as long, but only as long, as you are both very kind to Faith King will I hold my peace with regard to what I know. Faith King is also coming to the school.'

'Oh! Good gracious!' exclaimed Diana. 'Faith King—to your school?'

'Yes, indeed she is. Do you suppose for a moment that, after what has happened, I would leave her here to be sent to Coventry?'

'But—really and truly, Kathleen—she is not *your* Faith King. You have nothing to say to her.'

'She *is* my Faith King, because I happen to love her. Now, my dears, you can just clearly understand what I mean to do, and I am not the kind of girl to go back from my word. Faith has been very badly treated, and if either of you had a scrap of honour—a *scrap*—you would tell out what really happened that night; but as I know you have not—why, I don't expect the impossible. Perhaps some day you will think differently. But if at school you, Sophy Ross, or you, Diana, breathe one word against Faith's character, then Nora and I will be down on you with the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Now, I think that is about all. I am sorry to be disagreeable—not that I mind being disagreeable to you, Sophy; but I am sorry to be unpleasant to you, Diana, because you are my hostess. But matters have come to a pretty pass; and the only chance for one of the best girls I know is to take her in hand and save her. I may as well mention that you, Diana, will sleep in a room which communicates with my sister Nora's, and that Faith will occupy the room which Nora used to have next to mine. I think that is all. If you are wise, both of you, you will be good to Faith and influence the girls kindly towards her during the few days longer that we are all here. Now, perhaps, you will both let me have my room; for I declare, with all these bothers, I am a bit tired.'

Even Diana felt that she slunk away from that righteous young presence. As to Sophy, she went tremblingly and shakily out of the room. In the corridor she caught hold of Diana's arm.

'What's to be done? How are we to endure this?' she said.

'I don't know,' said Diana. 'Don't bother me at present. I don't believe for a moment I am going to school. I shall go and see mother about it.'

'But it would be rather nice for me if you did go, and you'd have a good time,' said Sophy.

'I don't know. I don't want to go. I want to get rid of Faith, but I don't want school. Why ever should mother have proposed that *I* should go? I always knew that father and mother hated schools. And there's that odious Kathleen, who has come into the house and seems to order everything according to her own sweet will! It's past enduring!'

Sophy did not say much. 'Perhaps we both had best be a little kind to Faith,' she said, and went slowly back to the schoolroom.

Meanwhile Diana went straight to her mother's room. Lady Ludlow was seated by the fire. Sir Charles was present.

'Mother,' said Diana—'mother!' She burst into the room, her face full of excitement, her eyes looking even handsomer than their wont, her whole expression full of daring and anger. 'What do you think Kathleen MacMahon has told me?'

'Oh, she has told you, has she, dear?'

'Don't be so noisy, Diana,' said her father. 'Your mother is tired after her journey.'

'But am I really going to school?'

'Yes; we both think it would be an excellent plan for you to go for a year, or perhaps two years. And it is very difficult to get into a select school like Mrs Fennimore's. Then, Eastbourne is a particularly healthy place. You will see life in a way you cannot

possibly see it at home; and of course you will have every comfort and consideration, my love,' said her mother. She put her arm round the girl's slim waist and drew her towards her. 'Oh, my dearest Di—I shall miss you! But it is for your own good.'

'I suppose it is,' said Sir Charles; 'although, as I said before, I never did approve of schools for young misses. I like them to grow up innocent, and quiet, and not too frightfully accomplished, under their own father's roof.'

'Then, dad, if that is the case, please—please let me stay at home! I hear that Faith is going, and that is all right. I don't like Faith—I don't mind saying so openly.'

'It's very unkind of you, my dear Diana, to dislike your cousin,' remarked her mother.

'Well, mother, you don't like her either for what she did.'

'Oh, my dear, we won't go into that now. Faith is going to school, and so are you. It is all settled, my dear, poor, sweet child; and I am sorry—more sorry than I can say—that you are not charmed at the prospect.'

'If Jacky was coming with me I wouldn't mind so much.'

'We can't spare Jacqueline,' said her father.

'Although, perhaps, after a time she may join you,' added the mother; 'but for one year at least, Diana, you and your Cousin Faith will be at school together.'

'I and my Cousin Faith!' said Diana. She felt inclined to grind her teeth. A wild fury took possession of her. 'Is it final? Is it absolutely settled?'

'Absolutely, Diana,' said her father in a voice of decision and displeasure. 'How dare you question us?'

'Very well,' said Diana. She left the room.

CHAPTER XIX.

INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL.

MRS FENNIMORE'S school was situated in the most charming and healthy part of Eastbourne. It was a very spacious house—in fact, it was two very large houses thrown into one. Each girl had her own bedroom; and there was a very large sitting-room which the girls had entirely to themselves. Into this room no teachers were expected to come. A girl could forfeit her privilege of enjoying the pleasure of the girls' sitting-room by bad conduct, but if she were well-behaved and disposed to be good and industrious she generally spent several hours of the day there.

Mrs Fennimore was most particular with regard to the class of pupil she received; and perhaps in all that school there were none who were not of high rank, with the exception of the three Rosses.

Mrs Fennimore had taken the Rosses on much lower terms than her other pupils. She had done this at the request of a very old friend who was interested in the girls, knowing how poor their father and mother were, and how necessary it was for them to have the very best education; in fact, this friend paid for their education. But all these matters were kept entirely in Mrs Fennimore's own breast; and not even the MacMahons, nor any of the other popular girls in the school, guessed why the Rosses were there.

Mrs Fennimore had been actuated by the kindest motives when she took Sophy, Maud, and Hilda Ross into her happy family, as she called her children.

There was nothing wrong about either Maud or Hilda. They were not specially good-looking; they were just ordinary, sensible, matter-of-fact girls, who amused themselves in the hours of amusement and learnt their lessons fairly well. They would never do brilliant things at school, but Mrs Fennimore hoped that before they left they would be sufficiently trained to be able to support themselves in some one calling or another. These were the days when all sorts of openings were ready for women; and she did not doubt that these three girls could get appointments which would enable them to remove the burden of their maintenance from their overworked parents' shoulders.

Mr and Mrs Ross lived in Manchester. The three elder girls, who went to Mrs Fennimore's school, were the beginning of a large family consisting mostly of boys. Mrs Ross was a very genial, kind, good-natured sort of woman. Mr Ross had made what was generally considered rather a mess of his life. He was a business man, but he had not the business faculty. In consequence, the whole family were extremely poor, and Sophy, from the very first, had felt the grind of poverty in all its humiliation.

It was doubtless a mistake of that kind neighbour, Mr Everard, to propose that the girls should be received at such a select school as Kendal House. There they met other girls who had abundance of money, whereas they themselves were reduced to many shifts to make ends meet. Had Mr Everard really known their condition he would have supplied them far more liberally with pocket-money; but he was not a rich man, and although he was Sophy's godfather, and very fond of the family, he thought he had done quite enough for them when he paid their school-fees and allowed them in addition a small sum weekly for stamps and current expenses.

Now, it so happened that Sophy, on her first arrival

at Eastbourne, had been terribly disgusted with the state of her wardrobe, and had gone boldly to an expensive dressmaker and asked her to supply her with suitable dresses. This woman—Madame Michel, as she called herself—was only too glad to do anything to oblige a young lady from Kendal House. Two or three dresses were made for Sophy and sent to her, and for a long time there was nothing said about payment of the same. But debts are some of those ill-omened birds that invariably come home to roost; and at the time when Sophy and her sisters were invited to spend Christmas at Haredale, Madame Michel had become extremely disagreeable in the letters she wrote to the young girl. Sophy had learnt to dread these letters; she was terribly afraid they might fall into the hands of Mrs Fennimore, who would be furious at the idea of one of her pupils owing a penny in the world. In her despair, Sophy wrote to her godfather, Mr Everard, asking him to lend her thirty pounds, but not giving him the reason of her request. He replied at once that he could not possibly do so, as he had now some difficulty in paying for her schooling and that of her sisters. Sophy had, therefore, secured old Mrs Mortimer's signet-ring with secret rapture. Every one would certainly suppose that Faith had stolen it, and she herself could sell it for a large sum. She could thus get rid of her odious debt to Madame Michel, and no one would be any the wiser.

But, alack and alas! Kathleen had stepped in, had terrified the girl into returning the ring; and now Sophy was back at school in a state of inward terror. Her only chance lay with Diana.

She and Diana shared a secret which, if known, would render their position anything but a pleasant one. Diana was undoubtedly the one who had instigated Sophy to act as she had done with regard to Faith. If only Diana, who was as rich as a Jew,

would lend her thirty pounds—of course she could call it a loan, although she had not the slightest idea of ever repaying it—then all might be well, and they might leave Faith King alone—she was an unimportant person. Kathleen would keep to her word and not explain what had really occurred, and Faith would learn to be happy in her new surroundings.

The most influential girls of the school were the MacMahons, who took the lead more or less in everything. That was because of their individual charm, their sweetness, their unselfishness. There were also the Sinclairs, two very nice girls about the same ages as the MacMahons; the Dacres, three girls; and several others who scarcely concern this story.

There was one thing Mrs Fennimore was determined about. Hers was—to use what is now considered an old-fashioned term—a finishing-school; but she made one resolve that, whether a finishing-school or not, the girls should be very nearly of the same age. In consequence, there was not one girl under fifteen or older than seventeen in the school. Thus they were all pretty much in the same class, could enjoy the advantages of the same masters, and had, as far as possible, the intellectual life which it was her aim and object to give them a taste for. Even Sophy felt that were that dreadful debt removed she might become happy and be a better girl than she was. But the debt—oh, the debt!—how it pressed upon her and terrified her!

Everything was in perfect order when the girls arrived at Kendal House. The Dacres and Sinclairs were already there. The names of the two Sinclairs were Philippa and Irene. The Dacre girls were called Janet, Dorothy, and Veronica. Both the Sinclairs and the Dacres were handsome, fine-looking girls. Veronica Dacre was nearly as fair and nearly as stately in appearance as Diana, and was one of

the leading girls in the school. Philippa Sinclair was a dark-eyed, almost sallow girl, but with a happy expression of face and a pleasing, downright manner. Her sister Irene was a sort of replica of Philippa, though less good-looking and less charming. But when the girls assembled together, as they did on that first night for supper, there was no one in the room who possessed that strange distinction which characterised Kathleen MacMahon. It was by no means that she was the most beautiful girl present; she was scarcely beautiful at all, except for the loveliness of her most lovely eyes. But there was such an expression of downright goodness, sweetness, and sincerity in her face that all people were attracted by her, and passed over in silence the superior fineness of feature which Diana and Veronica possessed.

As to Faith, she felt very proud when she found herself close to her friend at supper. Never before in her young life had she had a girl-friend. She had, of course, been dearly loved by Miss Chance, and there was always her beloved mother. But for a girl like Kathleen to single her out, and to show her marked attention, and to be kind as only Kathleen could be kind, warmed Faith's heart at that moment as nothing else in the world could do. In fact, that little heart of Faith's began slowly but surely to heal; it began to recover its tone. She felt sure she would be happy at school, and her face beamed with a sort of reflection of Kathleen's happiness.

Meanwhile, Sophy, who had quite a coterie of her own in the school, was chatting volubly with her special friends. There was a girl called Harriet Parr whom Sophy particularly affected—not because she admired her, but because she found her useful. Harriet was very rich, and Sophy adored all people who possessed money. Nevertheless, Harriet was

quite a good sort of girl, and would not do a mean or unkind thing to any one.

When supper came to an end, and the girls were pacing about and chatting together or retiring to corners of their special sitting-room, Harriet found a seat for herself near Sophy.

'Well,' she said, 'and what sort of holidays did you have?'

'Oh, pretty good,' replied Sophy. 'My sisters and I were at Haredale, you know.'

'Haredale—in Yorkshire! Do you mean that you were with the Ludlows?'

'Yes.'

'You *were* lucky. I wish I had had a jolly time like that. I have always heard that Haredale is such a splendid place, and that girls simply adore it.'

'It is a very nice place indeed,' said Sophy. 'I expect to go there again at Easter.'

'Do you? Are you a very great friend of the Ludlows?'

Sophy gave a slight smile. 'I rather fancy I am,' she said. 'You ask Diana what she thinks of me.'

'Diana? Is she the new girl—that very, very handsome girl who was seated next Nora MacMahon at supper? I don't think I ever saw any one quite so beautiful—unless, of course, Veronica, and she'd take the cake in any society.'

'It's very vulgar of you, Harriet, to make use of expressions of that kind. Take the cake! You couldn't say those sort of things at Haredale, I can assure you.'

'Oh, don't scold me!' said Harriet. 'I never was grand, even if you were. But tell me what you did all the time you were at Haredale.'

'We had no end of fun—charades, *tableaux vivants*, and all the rest. We were a very merry party.'

'And you brought Diana Ludlow back to school with you?'

'Yes.'

'She will be quite a distinguished member of our community,' continued Harriet. 'I wonder how you got her to come?'

'Oh, I managed it all right,' said Sophy.

'You're a wonderful girl, Sophy; you are so very clever!'

'Yes, I expect I've a good bit of brains,' said Sophy. 'It's well I have,' she added with a sigh, 'for I haven't much else.'

'Oh, I am sure you have just everything. You know you are a tremendous favourite with me, and with my sister Marian, and with half the girls in the school. But tell me, now, who is that other girl—that queer, rather dull girl in deep black who sat at supper almost in Kathleen MacMahon's pocket?'

'Oh, don't speak of her, my dear!' said Sophy; 'she is no friend of mine.'

'No friend of yours! Well, but what is her name? She has a name, I suppose?'

'Her name is Faith King.'

'Faith King! What a funny name! How is it that Kathleen MacMahon has taken her up?'

'Now look here, Harriet'—Sophy turned and faced her companion—'I am not going to tell tales out of school; but I could, if I would, tell such a story about that same Faith King as would open your eyes. I don't want to put you against her, mind. The MacMahons have taken her up, and that is enough. She is a cousin of Diana's, and when we arrived at Haredale we found her established in the dear old house.'

'She doesn't look a bit like Diana Ludlow,' remarked Harriet.

'I should rather think she doesn't. She is a low-down sort of cousin. I don't know anything about her antecedents; but I fancy, somehow, that her

mother—Lady Ludlow's sister—must have married beneath her. But whether that is the case or not I am not prepared to say. Anyhow, the MacMahons have taken her up, and we must make the best of her.'

'She doesn't look as if there was much wrong with her when all is considered,' remarked Harriet. 'She is not exactly pretty; but she has a pathetic, rather sweet face, as though — as though she had gone through trouble.'

'Oh, she puts that sort of face on; that is her rôle, you know.'

'Her rôle?'

'Yes, for she is neither clever nor beautiful. But I tell you what: she has got money, and that's something in her favour.'

'A good deal, I should say,' remarked Harriet.

'And we've all got to be kind to her; don't forget that,' continued Sophy. She gave a prodigious yawn as she spoke. 'Whether you are sleepy or not, Harriet, I am, and I am going off to bed.'

When Sophy reached her room she found a pile of letters waiting for her. She and her two sisters shared one large room. Maud and Hilda had already gone to bed and were sound asleep. Sophy never troubled herself much about them. To her they were profoundly uninteresting, commonplace girls. She was determined to make her own future by hook or by crook; but she was not going to please others, or make them frightfully happy. The two younger girls knew Sophy's ways, and had long ago contented themselves by leaving her serenely alone.

The letters which were awaiting her perusal lay on a little table near the fire. Sophy turned on the electric light, indifferent to the fact that Maud pulled the sheet over her face and Hilda turned herself towards the wall. She then sat down in an easy-

chair and proceeded to open her post. It had come during her absence. Mrs Fennimore never dreamed of reading her pupils' correspondence.

There were three letters waiting now for Sophy to peruse. One was from her mother. It was long and closely written. Sophy yawned as she opened it. She was not interested in home. The doings of the boys did not excite her. Little Merry, the youngest girl, might be as witty as she pleased; but Sophy's heart would never beat a trifle faster on that account. Mrs Ross wrote, however, with some anxiety.

'My dearest Sophy'—her letter ran—'I trust you and Maud and Hilda have had a good holiday. This is to greet you on your return to school. I wish I could write cheerfully; but I find it difficult to do so, for I am ill and the weather is very foggy and trying. Then your father, my dear child, has been speculating again, and has lost a lot of money; so we are very hard up—so hard up that you and your sisters must do without your usual dress-allowance this quarter. I am sorry, Sophy; but it can't be helped. It is hard to be poor, my dear child; but you will be earning your own living by-and-by, and it is so more than kind of our dear Mr Everard to pay your school expenses.

'You are now, my dear Sophy, going on seventeen years of age, and Mr Everard proposes to continue your school-allowance for at least another year—or until you are eighteen. At the end of that time he feels it only fair that you should do something to earn your living, and I know of a good family here who would be delighted to receive you as resident governess to teach their little children. They are the Cousins—I dare say you know them—those very rich people who live in Arklow Square. There are three little girls and a tiny boy; and you would have the complete care of them, acting at once as nursery-

governess and attending to them as far as putting them to bed and getting them up in the morning is concerned. I do not propose that you should keep this post for long; but it would do very well indeed for a beginning, for I am told by all those who know about these things that you must have experience before you get anything worth having.

'Mrs Cousins saw me about you, and said that she could offer you the post when you are eighteen years of age, as she will then be sending her head-nurse away and would like you to take her place as nursery-governess. There would be a nursemaid to do the rough work. You would live in the house, have all your expenses paid, and receive a salary of thirty pounds a year. That is quite a good sum. You would be absolutely your own mistress. I have therefore accepted the situation for you, Sophy. Maud and Hilda, being younger, will of course remain longer at Mrs Fenniinore's school; but you will leave next Easter, dear. Plenty of time yet, dear, for fun and enjoying your life. But I cannot tell you how truly glad I shall be to relieve dear Mr Everard of his kindness in supporting you all at school. He has lost a good deal of money lately, and, I know, feels the pinch very much. But he is such a dear, honourable man that nothing will induce him to go back from his word. I saw him the other day and told him about Mrs Cousins's offer, and he said that I could not possibly do better than accept it for you; so your future is—for the present at least—assured, my dear Sophy.

'I hope you are well, and also the other girls. We missed you all very much at Christmas, but tried to console ourselves with the thought that you were very happy elsewhere. You are making nice friends at your school, and they will serve you in good stead, I make no doubt, in the future. But don't forget, my dear, that most of those girls are rich, that you are

poor, and that your lot in life can have very little in common with theirs.

'The boys are doing fairly well, and Merry is the delight of our home—such a dear little, sweet pet! Kind Mr Everard has taken a great fancy to her, and promises to assist her also when the time comes for her to be educated. He is indeed a friend in need.—Your ever devoted and affectionate mother,

'SOPHIA ROSS.'

Sophy flung down the letter, her cheeks ablaze, her eyes bright as stars. 'I know those Cousins,' she said to herself. 'I will never go to them—never! As nursery-governess, indeed—or, rather, nurse—to their horrid little brats of children! Catch me! I know a thing better than that!'

She took up her next letter, which was from Mr Everard. It was short and to the point:

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—I trust you are doing well, and have had a merry Christmas. Your dear mother is looking tired and faded, and wants all the help she can get. She is one of the bravest women I know. Whatever happens, I trust that you girls will repay her goodness to you in the future.

'I don't want to be mean, and I am sure you and your sisters will understand if I am forced slightly to reduce your pocket-money this term. I have had some little financial difficulties, which I need not bother you about. But you have doubtless everything you want at school. Instead, therefore, my dear Sophia, of allowing you each five shillings a week, I am obliged to make it—at any rate until after Christmas—half a crown. No more at present, from your faithful friend, JOHN EVERARD.'

'Worse and worse!' thought Sophy. 'How simply abominable all the world is: mother, poorer than

ever, securing a post for me as nursery-governess to the Cousins; our miserable little pittance cut down to half; no money for dress, when we are as shabby as we can be; and—oh, good gracious! well do I know before I open it who *this* letter is from!'

The third letter was indeed from Madame Michel. It was couched in polite terms, but was quite firm:

'Would Miss Sophy Ross have the goodness to pay her the thirty pounds she owes for dress between now and the twentieth of the month? Madame Michel has waited a long time, and it is inconvenient to wait any longer. If Miss Sophy Ross would prefer that Madame Michel should send the bill direct to Miss Sophy's good father, or, failing that, to Mrs Fennimore, Madame Michel will be glad to do so; but in any case she must have her money by the twentieth in order to meet certain heavy obligations.'

'The twentieth!' said Sophy to herself. She trembled all over. 'I—pay that woman thirty pounds by the twentieth! Why, it's the twelfth to-day! I can't possibly, possibly do it! And yet I *must* do it! If she were to write to Mrs Fennimore—and I can see by the tone of her letter that she would write to Mrs Fennimore in a minute—I should be simply expelled from the school; and then, goodness only knows what would become of me! *I*—to go back to Manchester to that horrid squalid house, to those noisy boys, to that tiresome little Merry—who isn't a bit a nice child, although mother imagines she is—oh dear! oh dear! Sometimes I almost wish I had never been born! If it had not been for that horrid Kathleen MacMahon I'd have been all right now! That ring was put in my way, and I could have disposed of it and paid Madame Michel, and—and—all the awful things that are staring me in the face wouldn't have happened! Well, there's nothing

for it, nothing at all, but to speak to Diana to-morrow. I have, thank goodness, some power over Di; and I must use it now, if never again. I can at least, in my hour of humiliation, drag Diana down with me; and she is far too proud to endure such a state of things if she can possibly help it.'

Sophy sat for a long time musing by the fire. At last she gathered up her letters, put them all carefully into a drawer that locked, slipped the key into the pocket of her school-frock, and got into bed rather later than was the custom at Kendal House. But this was the first day of term, when allowances were made for all the girls, who were naturally more or less in a state of excitement at the thought of all their Christmas fun and in the anticipation of a pleasant time at school; for no sensible and well-brought-up girl regarded Kendal House as anything but a charming home for training, recreation, and happiness.

Why, then, did one girl lay her head on her pillow with black care as her companion? Sophy, however, was not gifted with the finer shades of feeling. Had she been so, she would have been a very different girl. She fell asleep because she was dead-tired, and slept soundly until the great gong awakened all the girls at half-past six on the following morning.

Hilda and Maud jumped up at once, but Sophy lingered for a minute. She could not quite think what was the matter. Then all the circumstances in connection with the three letters rushed through her mind. Her father and mother were poorer than ever, they could not even give their daughters their usual dress-allowance. Meagre as that allowance was, it was decidedly better than nothing. Had it come, Sophy might have coaxed Maud and Hilda to let her appropriate the entire sum and give it to Madame Michel as a sop to keep her quiet for the present. But it was not coming at all. There was, therefore,

no sop ready to be presented to the inexorable Frenchwoman, who would certainly claim her due. Even Mr Everard was quite horrid: he was halving their pocket-money—their miserable, beggarly five shillings a week each was to be reduced to half a crown! The whole thing was hateful. Sophy wished—at least she almost wished—that she was not an inmate of Kendal House. She almost wished that she had not spent her Christmas holidays at Haredale. It was all very well to know nice people, but it was not at all well to be so poor as not to be able to follow in their footsteps.

'You had best get up, Sophy,' said Hilda, who was half-way through her dressing at that moment.

'Well, yes, I suppose I must,' said Sophy, springing out of bed.—'Girls, I have bad news for you. No dress-allowance this term. Dad has got into fresh trouble, and our pocket-money is reduced by one-half. I wonder, for my part, who has the money in this world, for certainly it doesn't come along our way.'

Maud, who was in the act of splashing her face with cold water, turned and gazed at her sister in amazement. 'No dress-allowance!' she said. 'But I want a new coat so badly!'

'Want must be your master, then, my dear, thanks to the dad, who has been speculating again—and, of course, again failing. There, don't stand looking so stupid, with the water dripping from the end of your nose and chin! Dry your face and get on with your dressing.'

'You're very unsympathetic, Sophy,' remarked Hilda; 'you don't seem to pity us one bit.'

'Well, I do; I pity us all. I've another bit of bad news too.'

'Oh dear! oh dear!' said Hilda. 'What next?'

'You saw those letters that were on my table last night?'

'Of course we did. We turned them over and over

and examined the postmarks, and tried to see some of the writing through the envelopes, but we didn't succeed.'

'I stayed awake for a good quarter of an hour, hoping you would come up and read the letters to us,' confessed Maud; 'but sleep overcame me.'

'For my part, I am just as glad I didn't stay awake,' said Hilda, 'for they seem to have been full of horrid news. But out with it, Sophy; we had best know the truth at once.'

'No dress-allowance—I have told you that, girls—at any rate until Easter,' continued Sophy. 'An odious, abominable place as nursery-governess secured for me, at the Cousins's, forsooth! in Manchester, as soon as I am eighteen years old, which will be in a year at Easter. That's lively, to begin with. The next part of our bad news is that our dear friend and financier, Mr John Everard, is also in money-difficulties. I wonder if he and the dad have been having a "spec" together? Anyhow, he's reducing our pocket-money from five shillings a week to half a crown.'

'Oh, good gracious!' exclaimed Maud. 'Why, I always spend half a crown on chocolates! And where's the money to come from for postage and other matters?'

'Well, you must swallow your bad news as best you can,' replied Sophy.

'You had a third letter,' remarked Hilda, 'and it had the Eastbourne postmark. Who in the world was that from?'

'Oh, that's a little secret of mine; and I can tell you it's not at all a pleasant little secret, so the less you know about it the better.'

Hilda was combing out her long, thick hair before the glass. She now plaited it into a long tail and tied it deftly with a piece of brown ribbon. 'I suppose we can live without chocolates and without new

dresses,' she said. 'Anyhow, the school is very nice; and you, Sophy—you surely will get a better post than nursery-governess to the Cousins. Why, it would be perfectly horrid for you to go there!'

'Oh dear me, yes!' exclaimed Sophy. 'I'm not worrying about that.'

Another bell sounded. This was the summons which the girls were to obey by going downstairs at once. Maud and Hilda were both ready, and they hastily helped Sophy to fasten her school-frock. Then they all ran downstairs, trying to feel cheerful, but rather failing in the attempt.

CHAPTER XX.

A PROPOSAL OF DESPERATION.

THE first day at school, however nice that school may be, is generally a trying one both for pupils and teachers. Both pupils and teachers require to be broken in again to harness. They have lost the knack of concentration, of method, of that earnest endeavour which dares not waste even a minute of time, and which makes a well-conducted school so precious a training for young people.

The happy girls at Mrs Fennimore's suffered less from this malady than girls do at most schools, for she herself knew what it meant, and made the yoke of discipline very light on the first day after returning to work. She told her girls at breakfast that she intended to take them all to a very famous hippodrome in the afternoon, and that, in consequence, the morning lessons would be light, and full work would not begin until the following day.

This announcement was received with cheers of applause from all the happy young pupils.

Kathleen, who was seated, as usual, close to Faith, whispered to her, 'Didn't I say that she was a darling? I am going to introduce you to her specially, and I know she will be specially nice to you.'

Sophy was chatting with Harriet Parr, and looked as though she had not a care in the world.

Diana was *distraite* and indifferent to her surroundings. She did not even glance at Faith, but condescended occasionally to say a word or two to Nora. Notwithstanding the undoubted attractions of Kendal House, those attractions had not so far

awakened any enthusiasm within her. She did not like school. She pined for Haredale, for Jacqueline, for the old free, happy life, she longed for Miss Price and her different masters, she wanted to have a good gallop on her horse, she even wanted—and that was a new sensation to her—to kiss her mother. She was by nature a very cold girl, but for the first time in her life there was something in sympathy between her and Faith. They both missed their mother, although Diana's feeling towards Lady Ludlow was indeed widely different from that broken-hearted sense of loneliness which possessed poor Faith whenever she thought of that mother whom God had taken to Himself.

Morning lessons began much as usual, and the new girls were appointed to their different classes. Faith, to her great delight, found that she was in the same form as Kathleen. She was not so good at languages, but her general knowledge was excellent for a girl of her age; for had she not been taught by her own mother, and taught in such a way that she could never forget those most precious instructions?

Diana, on the contrary, to her own great disgust, was relegated to a lower form; and in that very form was Sophy—Sophy Ross, whom she now thoroughly both disliked and feared. It seemed to Diana that her eyes were opened, and that she had indeed demeaned herself when she had accepted Sophy's aid in humiliating Faith. Diana herself would never for an instant have thought of such a means of accomplishing her purpose. It was Sophy who thought of it. And now what was the consequence? Faith was sent to school—was received at a very select school with extreme kindness and consideration; and she, the proud Diana Ludlow, was forced to accompany her—to accompany her and yet not to be with her, not to be of the same set.

Diana was really fond of Kathleen—that is, as fond

as she could be of any one—but she did not care for Nora; and Nora, although she was willing to oblige her sister, was certainly the last kind of person to put herself out about Diana.

Nora had her own special friends in the school, amongst whom were Philippa and Irene Sinclair.

As soon as morning school came to an end Veronica Dacre came up and began to talk to Diana. Veronica was greatly struck by the resemblance between herself and that queenly-looking young girl. She said now in her pretty, refined way, 'We are so like each other in appearance that, somehow or other, I think we must be related.'

At another time Diana would have been quite good-natured about this resemblance; but she was too cross to-day to be good-natured about anything, and said in a very icy voice, 'I fail to see any resemblance, and I don't think we are related.'

'Oh, I am sure I don't care!' said Veronica, turning away at once, and speaking to another girl whom she happened to know and like very much.

Diana saw that she had unwittingly made an enemy of one of the popular girls of the school, but she was too indifferent to care. It was at that moment that Sophy flew to her side.

'Di, I want to speak to you.'

'Well, Sophy, I don't want to speak to you.'

'But I am afraid you must; it is of the utmost importance.'

'I don't understand you,' said Diana.

'I must have a little conversation with you,' said Sophy; 'and what I thought was that perhaps you and I need not go to the hippodrome this afternoon.'

'The hippodrome!' said Diana with a sigh. 'I have been to the best in London. I don't want to go a bit. Must we go?'

'I don't think we need. Maud and Hilda will go; but Mrs Fennimore is always perfectly sweet about

allowing us to stay at home, if we prefer it, instead of going to her special treats. So I tell you what: shall I run to her now and ask her if you and I may walk about together on the Esplanade? It's a lovely day, and will do you much more good than sitting in that stifling hippodrome.'

'But I really have nothing special to say to you, Sophy.'

'I never said you had,' remarked Sophy. 'I only said that I have something special and of very great importance to say to you. You wouldn't like to be'—— Sophy paused and looked impressive, then she said solemnly, 'Diana, it's a case of tell-tale-tit unless you are agreeable.'

Diana turned very pale. Then she said, 'As you please, of course, although I fail to understand.'

'Nonsense!' said Sophy, 'you understand just as well as I do. I will arrange it with dear Mrs Fennimore.'

Accordingly, matters were comfortably arranged. The girls were allowed to walk on the Esplanade in front of the great school for half an hour. Then they were to return to the house, where Miss Thomson—the English teacher—would give them tea. In short, they were to have, as Mrs Fennimore expressed it, a happy afternoon to themselves.

'And try, dear,' Mrs Fennimore said, as she touched Sophy on the shoulder, 'to draw out that poor young girl, for she doesn't look very happy. I have not yet fathomed her character, although I trust I shall do so by-and-by.'

'There is only one word by which Diana Ludlow can be described,' was Sophy's remark, 'and that is *pride*. She is the quintessence of pride.'

'Ah, my dear child, pride, you know, must have a fall! She is a handsome girl, well-born, and endowed with good looks. I will say no more, for comparisons are odious. Two new girls have come

to my school, and I have looked forward with great interest to the arrival of Diana Ludlow.'

'And you are disappointed?' said Sophy, looking at her mistress expectantly.

'I must not discuss your schoolfellows with you, Sophy.'

'But I know your thought, all the same,' said Sophy.

Mrs Fennimore did not pursue the subject; and Sophy went away to reflect over the circumstance that the melancholy Faith, as she generally spoke of Faith King, had evidently made a far more pleasing impression on her new mistress than had the stately Diana.

Sophy was, however, far, far too anxious about her own concerns to give much thought to Mrs Fennimore's likes or dislikes at that moment. When the girls at last left to pay their visit to the hippodrome she went into the hall and waited for Diana, who came languidly downstairs, wearing her rich furs and looking as distinguished as a beautiful young girl could look.

'It's very sunshiny outside now,' said Sophy; 'and you won't be cold in that lovely dress, will you, Di?'

'I don't know,' said Diana. 'I don't like school, and I hate the one who sent me here.'

'The one who sent you here! Why, it was your mother who sent you here!'

'Nonsense!' said Diana.

They had left the house now. Sophy was wearing a thick coat and a little white woollen wrap. She looked very poorly dressed beside her companion, and people must have remarked on the great contrast between the two girls as they paced up and down on the parade.

'Who sent you to school, then?' said Sophy.

'Well, in a sort of way, you did, Sophy; but of course the moving genius in the whole matter was

Kathleen MacMahon. Who would have supposed that she'd have been quite so mean?'

'As a matter of fact,' said Sophy, 'Kathleen had nothing whatever to do with *your* going to school. She did want Faith to go; for of course Kathleen knows the truth about that little scene which took place on the last night of the old year. She guessed that Faith would be sent to Coventry at Haredale, and thought that she could protect her while at school. Well, of course Faith can be cleared.'

'Cleared! What do you mean?'

'It can all be explained—I mean, the true story of that *tableau vivant* of hers.'

'Sophy, I don't—I really don't quite understand.'

'Well, you will in a minute or two, Diana; for, to be frank with you, I am quite desperate. You are as rich as a Jew, and I am as poor as a church mouse; and I want the Jew to help the church mouse, or I'll—tell-tale-tit.'

'You terrify me!' said Diana; 'and you speak in such a low, vulgar sort of way. How could I ever have made a girl like you my friend?'

'Well, you did, you see. You used me for your dirty work.'

'Yes, I know that quite well,' said Diana. 'Why do you say *my dirty work?*' She remembered that Kathleen had used that very expression in her letter when she refused to comply with Diana's request.

'Well, wasn't it dirty work?' said Sophy. 'I got no good out of it; I only did it to oblige you, and because I hoped we'd always be friends.'

'I said I'd ask you to Haredale at Easter, and I will,' said Diana. 'From what you have told me, your home in Manchester cannot be very agreeable; so I suppose a visit to Haredale in the spring of the year will be reward sufficient for what you have done.'

'No, it won't. I want more.'

'Absurd, Sophy! What can you mean?'

'I want more, I say—more. I will tell you everything. You who have never known the want of money cannot possibly conceive how I feel, who have not any; you who can order, or have ordered for you, any amount of dresses, cannot know what it is to be like me, with just enough to keep me warm and no more. But there—there! Lend me—I will pay it back some day, some distant day—lend me thirty pounds, Diana, and I will promise never—never, as long as I live—to breathe one single word about that affair of the last day of the old year. Lend it me between now and the twentieth of this month and I am safe—and you are safe. But refuse, and—there's no help for it—I shall have to leave this school in disgrace. And if I go I tell about you and what you suggested. There, Di, it's a case of tell-tale-tit!'

Diana turned and stared at her companion. It took a good deal to move her; but she was moved now, and into her large blue eyes there crept, gradually but surely, an expression of downright terror.

'Tell-tale-tit?' she repeated.

'Yes, that is about it. You know quite well what has occurred. You took—goodness only knows why—a dislike to Faith, although she's not a bit a bad sort, and would have let you alone if you had let her alone. But you got jealous of her because your mother offered her a home at Haredale.'

'Well, I presume that's *my* affair,' said Diana, breathing quickly and resuming her walk up and down the parade.

'It so happens,' said Sophy, 'that it is also *my* affair—it is very much my affair at the present moment. You took a dislike to Faith, and you made up your mind that she should be humiliated. You could not manage this alone, and you wanted Kathleen to help you. Well, of course, Di, you must have

very, very little penetration of character if you thought Kathleen would do anything of that sort, for she's not made that way.'

'But *you* are—that is what you mean?' said Diana.

Sophy uttered a sigh. 'Perhaps so,' she said. 'Some of us are born good and some bad; or, rather—— I don't mean that a bit. I mean that some of us are born rich and some poor, and the poor ones have always to knuckle under to the rich. Now, Kathleen has plenty of money, and so has Nora, and so has Faith for that matter, and so have you, Diana. But I, poor little Sophy, am very, very poor.'

'And now,' said Diana, 'shall we go in? It's rather cold on the parade.'

'Nonsense!' said Sophy; 'you're not cold in those lovely furs. If you were me, with just a little white woollen wrap, you might have cause to complain; but you don't stir one inch towards the house, Diana, until you have told me what you mean to do.'

'What I mean to do? Good gracious! Have I not been punished enough in being sent to this odious school? I am not going to do anything, Sophy.'

'I want thirty pounds; and I want you to give it to me—or, if you prefer it, to lend it to me. Mother has got me an odious post—oh, I needn't describe it; but it will be mine when I am eighteen years of age—that's in about a year and three months. I'll be able to pay you back some of the money then; I won't be able to do so before, so I may as well be frank about it. Anyhow, this is how things stand. I want thirty pounds, and I want you to let me have it, or'——

'You are exceedingly cool, Sophy. I can see nothing whatever for it but to tell you frankly and plainly that I haven't got thirty pounds in the world. My people are rich, I know, but it isn't likely they'd give a large sum like that to a schoolgirl. Oh, to think that I should be in this position! Anyhow,

however anxious I am to oblige you, I simply haven't got the money.'

This was a checkmate to Sophy for a minute, and she felt her heart almost stop with terror. Then she spoke defiantly, 'To-day is the thirteenth, and I have got until the twentieth. I will tell you everything, Di. You and I ought to be friends, for we managed that dear little affair about Faith and broke off her friendship with Mrs Mortimer so beautifully.'

'I hate to think of the affair now,' said Diana, 'and I heartily wish I had had nothing to do with it.'

'It's no use wasting your time hating what has happened. You've got to consider the results; and nothing will change the results, unless, indeed'—here Sophy spoke brightly and with great animation—'unless, indeed, Mrs Mortimer is told the whole truth, that you — you, Diana Ludlow — thought of this scheme, and put me up to forcing little Faith to take the part she did.'

'Who *dare* tell Mrs Mortimer that?' said Diana, her face very pale.

'I will tell you everything, Diana. When I came to Haredale I hadn't the slightest idea of doing anything specially bad or mean. I was delighted at being asked, and so were Maud and Hilda. We were proud, too, of counting people like you and your sister as our friends, and it was great fun coming with the MacMahons. But when you asked me to help you I saw my way to a good deal that would assist me in the future. Therefore I naturally did not say "No." Now, this is the state of things at school. I told you that I was poor. I am miserably poor, and so is Maud, and so is Hilda. We don't talk of these things at school, for Mrs Fennimore would be very angry indeed if money were mentioned. She says that schoolgirls ought not to think of money at all; that money-cares come later in life, and ought not to affect the characters of schoolgirls.'

'She is quite right,' said Diana. 'Why do you think of it, Sophy?'

'Why do I think of it? I will tell you why. When we came here, we three—that is, a year and a half ago—I found that my dress, compared with the dress of the other girls, was—well, was not presentable; and I was so elated and charmed at the thought of belonging to such a very select school that I went off in that dear little mad way I have and had an interview with one of the most stylish dressmakers in the place, and she made me several frocks—oh, quite simple, I assure you! I don't suppose you'd wear one of them, but I am very careful with my dress; and, amongst other things, I got one or two pretty costumes for the evening, which stood me in good stead at Haredale. Well, my dear, I went into debt for all these things, and the debt amounts to thirty pounds—yes, thirty pounds; and I haven't paid a penny of it, and I don't see how I am to pay a penny of it. Madame Michel has written to me several times asking for the money, and I really don't know what to do. I thought, somehow, that I might get it from an old friend at home; I even wrote to him on the subject—not telling him what I wanted it for, but asking for a little loan. Well, he refused; and he really can't help himself, for he isn't rich, and he is kind to us girls in other ways which I need not explain. So that is the position. Madame Michel wrote me a letter which I received last evening, in which she says that she must have her thirty pounds by the twentieth of this month or she will write to father.'

'Well, that'll be all right, won't it?' said Diana.

Sophy gave a harsh, untuneful laugh. 'How little you know my father!' she said. 'He isn't like yours. Father could no more pay her that than he could fly. Besides, she can only get father's address through Mrs Fennimore; and if Mrs Fennimore knows that I

have done this thing I shall be expelled from school—yes, expelled. That isn't a nice thing to happen. So I have just made up my mind that if I go I'll tell all about you—all about what you said to me with regard to Faith King, and how you—yes, you—made me invent some plan of humiliating her and of hurting her through her best friend, who happened to be that wonderful old Mrs Mortimer of Court Abbey. I shall be reckless if I leave the school in disgrace; and if I fall I promise you, Diana, that you shall fall with me. I'll just tell Kathleen and Nora and Mrs Mortimer what happened. Surely that will be enough?'

'You are the most horrid girl I ever came across!' was Diana's remark.

'Horrid or not, I am desperate; and, being desperate, I mean to do what I say. If you can manage to lend me thirty pounds I am safe—and you are safe; but if you can't, why—you must take the consequences.'

'It's a very unpleasant thing indeed,' said Diana.

'Perhaps you would like to read Madame Michel's letter? Perhaps you think I am deceiving you?'

'Oh, I don't want to read her horrid letter! I can't understand any girl going into debt.'

'Of course you can't—you, with your thousands! Anyhow, that's the state of things. Will you, or will you not, lend me thirty pounds?'

'But, Sophy—Sophy—how can I lend you what I haven't got?'

Sophy laughed. 'You don't want to be disgraced here, do you?' she said.

'Disgraced here? I don't much care what happens to me here; but to be disgraced at home—to have what I did known there—would be intolerable,' said Diana.

'Well, you can stop the whole thing by helping me.'

Diana shivered, even though she was so warmly

clothed in fur. 'Let's go into the house now,' she said quickly.

Sophy gave a low sigh of relief. She had no resources, but she was positively certain that Diana had plenty.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SECOND STRING TO HER BOW.

THAT night it was Diana Ludlow who lay awake. Sophy Ross, having cast her cares completely on the shoulders of another person, felt comparatively happy. She had a few days left in which to breathe, and during those few days she would enjoy herself as much as possible.

Meanwhile she took care to have as many strings as possible to her bow. It was within the region of possibility that Diana might fail her. She therefore thought it wise to make up to Harriet Parr.

Harriet was a good-natured, clumsy sort of girl, whom no one in the world would specially notice except for the fact that her people were rich. It was that fact which drew Sophy towards her at the present moment. Harriet was a lady by birth; but she was by no means in the same set as the Ludlows, or the Dacres, or the Sinclairs, or the MacMahons. They formed a set quite by themselves in the school; whereas the Parrs, and the Rosses, and a few other girls formed their own less remarkable set, enjoyed themselves vastly, and, until Sophy put in her dreadful little spoke, were fairly happy.

Now, it occurred to Sophy that in case Diana were to fail her—and there was no knowing what Diana would do—she might work some good results with Harriet Parr. She accordingly spent the whole of the following afternoon devoting herself to Harriet, and devoting herself with all the charm of which she was capable. No one could tell a story with more verve than Sophy Ross; her green eyes would

sparkle, her little odd face would pucker up with a look of the most intense amusement as she told her tale.

She now charmed both Harriet and her sister Marian by giving them very fanciful accounts of the glories of Haredale, of the magnificent position held by the Ludlows in the county—not forgetting to mention the fact that Diana Ludlow was her very greatest friend.

'I am going there again for Easter,' said Sophy in her modest way, dropping her eyes as she spoke. 'Of course I should like to go home—one naturally does pine to see one's own father and mother; but that dear Diana cannot live without me, and has absolutely forced me to promise to go back there for the holidays, so I promised to go.'

'I saw you walking about together yesterday,' said Harriet; 'but I should never have guessed by Miss Ludlow's manner that you were such tremendous friends.'

'Oh, but we are! You ask her. Asking is believing,' said Sophy.

Diana was passing at that moment; and Sophy suddenly stood up, caught one of Diana's hands, and pulled her forward.

'Diana,' she said, 'may I introduce my friends, Harriet and Marian Parr?—Miss Ludlow; the Misses Parr.—I have been telling Harriet and Marian,' continued the audacious Sophy, 'that you and I are just tremendous friends—that, in short, you can't live without me; and that I am going back to spend Easter with you—just to make you happy, you poor old dear! Do you know, Harriet was rude enough to say she did not believe me; so will you tell her the truth?'

Diana's face was looking quite pale and worn. 'Yes,' she said slowly after a long period of hesitation, 'Sophy is coming back to spend Easter with

me at Haredale.' She then walked away without vouchsafing a word to the other girl.

'There! Didn't I tell you?' said Sophy in exultation.

'You seem very proud of it,' said Marian. 'For my part, I don't specially admire that girl. She may be very grand and all that; but Veronica Dacre is every bit as handsome, and she doesn't like her at all—she says she is a very rude girl. I don't specially envy you going to spend Easter at Haredale—wherever Haredale may be.'

'Stuff and nonsense, Marian! You're just consumed with envy. And all the world knows where Haredale is—one of the finest places in Yorkshire; and Sir Charles Ludlow and Lady Ludlow are about the grandest and most looked-up-to people in the county. I think it was Diana who told me—anyhow, I heard it—that he is about the oldest baronet in England—that is, that his title dates back further than any one else's. And Diana's pride suits her, for all you may say to the contrary.'

'Well, it doesn't suit me,' said Marian, getting up and moving away.

Sophy nestled up close to Harriet. 'Harrie,' she said in a confiding voice, 'I'm awfully fond of you, you know.'

'Are you, Sophy?' said Harriet. 'Well, I am fond of you too, and of Maud and Hilda; I think you are all very nice girls. Hilda is my very special friend in the school.'

'I want you, Harrie, to make me of all your friends the most special.'

'But how can I?' said Harriet, looking with her honest blue eyes at her companion. 'What we feel about people we cannot help, and, try as we may, we can't alter that feeling.'

'Well, I want you to have a good hard try. Now, you pretend that you don't care one bit to know Diana Ludlow?'

'Oh, I'd like to know her very well if she's nice; but I don't see, just because people happen to be of high birth, why I should put myself out about them.'

'You would like to go to Haredale, all the same, wouldn't you?'

Harriet's eyes sparkled. 'That is a different thing,' she said. 'I love very old country places—in fact, I have a passion for them. Father's rich, but his place is quite new; and I do so pine for great long avenues shaded by beech-trees, and for lawns with cedar-trees here and there, and great old mulberry-trees, and houses with magnolias climbing up them, and turret rooms, and a ghost or two thrown in for fun.'

'I never heard of any ghost at Haredale; but there is everything else, and—oh, such a nice forest! It would be perfectly magnificent at Easter! And I tell you what it is, Harrie: if you will choose me as your chiefest friend—as your very chiefest—Diana is really so very fond of me that I think I could manage to get an invitation for you to come to Haredale for the Easter holidays.'

'But what about Marian?'

'Oh, Marian doesn't care.'

'She certainly doesn't care as much as I do,' said Harriet. 'It isn't Diana I like, remember, for a single moment; but I am fascinated with the thought of an old place.'

'When you get there you will be more fascinated with other things. There's her sister Jacqueline—Jacky, we call her; and there are two dear little kids, Patty and Gerty; and—and—there's Sir Charles—oh, so stately and magnificent! and there's Lady Ludlow, a charming woman. There are horses to ride too, and there's all kinds of fun going on from morning till night. You would like it, Harrie; and it would be a feather in your cap, wouldn't it, to be able to announce here in the school that you have stayed at Haredale?'

'Yes, I should like it; but I certainly judge by Diana Ludlow's manner that she has not the slightest idea of inviting me.'

'She will invite you, positive sure, if you will do a wee trifle for me.'

'A wee trifle for you, Sophy! Why, what can I do for you?'

'Lend me your gold necklet with the turquoise in it—that pretty thing you wear in the evenings.'

Harriet turned and stared at Sophy. 'What do you want it for?' she asked.

'Oh, just for a joke. I want to wear it myself one night, and when people ask me who it belongs to I am going to say that you gave it to me.'

Harriet was silent for a minute. 'I will let you have the necklet,' she said—'and you shall keep it, for I really don't care twopence about it—on the day when you get me the invitation to go to Haredale for Easter.'

'Oh, but please lend it to me now, won't you, dear Harrie?'

'No, I can't. I never do things quite for nothing, and I don't want to *lend* it at all. You can't wear it much at school, for Mrs Fennimore will hardly ever allow any of us to wear jewellery. I only showed it to you for fun, but I will give it to you as your very own on the day you get me a proper invitation to spend Easter at Haredale.'

'Very well, I suppose you can't do more,' said Sophy in a slightly disappointed voice.

She turned the conversation to indifferent matters, and presently the girls returned to the schoolroom for their afternoon work. As they were going in Sophy found herself close to Diana. She touched Diana on the sleeve.

Diana turned and looked at her. 'Well?' she said.

'I only wanted to remind you that it's the fourteenth to-day,' said Sophy.

'What a funny thing to say!' remarked Nora, who was walking by Diana's side.

Diana, however, did not smile. She went up to her room presently and wrote a letter to Jacqueline. All her pride was up in arms—all the worst side of her nature was on the surface. She had done wrong —oh yes, now she knew well how very wrong she had done!—she had put herself in the power of an awful girl. But something must be done; she could not stand—no, she could not stand public disgrace. She had just time to write to Jacqueline, and she sat down and wrote as follows:

'Dear Jacky,—Of course I am miserable at school, but don't tell father and mother. There are several girls here, and I suppose some of them are quite decent. Your favourite Faith is petted and fussed over by Kathleen. Kathleen makes quite a fool of herself over that girl; while Nora, it seems to me, keeps a sort of guard over your humble servant.

'Now that position, as you can very well guess, Jacky, is not at all what suits me. However, I may as well come to the point of this letter. Can you manage to get me thirty pounds by hook or by crook? I don't suppose you can, for I don't want you to ask father or mother anything about it; but perhaps Miss Price would lend it to you. Tell her it's of the greatest importance, and that I want it by return of post. My want is nothing fanciful, Jacky —it is *real;* and if I get it, it will save your sister from untold misery. If Miss Price can't by any possibility lend me the money—of course I should manage to pay her at Easter—then you must rummage in my drawers and sell some of my jewellery. I don't care a bit for that old Indian filigree-work ornament that was left me by my godmother; but I believe it is quite valuable, as it is so very old-fashioned. You will have to take Pricy into your confidence; but

Pricy's a dear, good soul, and would do anything in the world for either of us, I know. Pricy would manage to sell the gold ornaments; and I have no doubt she could get thirty pounds, or perhaps more, for them. Anyhow, I want that money, and I want it by return of post. Don't fail me, darling Jacky. How I wish you were here! It's all very well to talk about school in the rapturous way Nora MacMahon does; but it's a poor life, very poor indeed, compared with Haredale. Still, if you were with me it would make a difference.

'Please regard this letter as quite private; only, of course, you must confide in Pricy, for I know you haven't the money, and I haven't it. But I think Pricy would do a good deal for her poor old Diana, more particularly when she knows that she is in trouble.'

Diana read this letter over hastily. It was bad, it was mean, she felt that she had lowered herself by writing it. Nevertheless, worse badnesses and worse meannesses must appear on the surface if that letter did not go; and, alack and alas! if that letter did not bring her the coveted money!

She ran downstairs herself to put it into the post-box. As she was dropping it in she came face to face with Mrs Fennimore. Mrs Fennimore had hardly spoken to Diana yet, but now she stopped and held out her hand.

'My dear,' she said, 'I am having a very nice little tea in my room with your cousin Faith King and your friend Kathleen MacMahon. It will give me great pleasure if you will join us.'

Diana longed to say, 'I would much rather not,' but she did not dare.

'Thank you,' she half-stammered. She wondered if Mrs Fennimore's eyes would pierce through the mask which she generally wore over her somewhat

impassive face. But Mrs Fennimore was looking at her kindly and saying to herself, 'What a handsome girl she is, and yet how difficult, how very difficult to know! Still, there could be nothing mean, there could be nothing that was not above-board, belonging to a face like that.'

Mrs Fennimore meant to draw Diana out. She was interested in this reserved girl.

'Tea is ready now,' she said in her pleasant voice. 'Will you come with me directly?'

'Yes,' said Diana.

Mrs Fennimore had forgotten to mention that Veronica Dacre was also one of her guests. When Diana entered she found Faith cosily established in a chair not far from the fire, while Kathleen was chatting in her lively way with Veronica.

The appearance of Diana brought a cloud to Faith's brow; but Kathleen said cheerfully, 'Hallo, Di! I am glad to see you.'

Diana felt almost grateful. She sat down near Kathleen and as far as possible from Veronica.

Mrs Fennimore now entered the room and proceeded to dispense tea. As she did so her eyes suddenly glanced from Veronica to Diana. 'My dear girls,' she said, 'how remarkably alike you both are!'

'Yes,' said Veronica; 'but not in nature, I think.'

Diana flushed angrily. Mrs Fennimore raised her brows in some astonishment. Then she began to talk on various matters, not allowing anything personal to creep into the conversation. Only once she said in a gentle and very affectionate tone:

'Little Faith is not very strong, and we've got to excuse some of her work for a time.—But your cousin will soon be herself again, Diana. I was obliged, however, to send for the doctor to see her this morning. He says she is a good deal pulled down.'

Diana longed to say, 'Just like Faith: putting it on—always putting it on!' But she held her peace.

After a minute she said, 'You look better, Faith—at least, better than when you left Haredale.'

'Oh, I am quite well, really,' said Faith. Then she added, turning and looking full at Mrs Fennimore, 'And I know I shall be very happy at school.'

'I hope you will, dear; and I am so glad that you have that intense love for literature. Your English Literature teacher tells me that your knowledge of our best classics is quite surprising for a girl of your age.'

Faith coloured. She did not dare to mention her mother's name, and yet it was that mother who had taught her all the wonderful things that had filled her brain from her earliest days.

'I love literature myself,' said Mrs Fennimore. 'I mean to have some good Shakespeare readings during the present term, and I think all you girls might join our Shakespeare Society. Faith, of course, will join. I expect she knows more about Shakespeare than any other girl in the school.—But you, Diana, must also take your part in these delightful readings. What do you say, my dear?'

'I have no love for reading aloud; but if you wish it, Mrs Fennimore, of course I will.'

'Well, I think I do; and the way we study Shakespeare is quite unique. We more or less act the different parts. Our first reading will be on the evening of the twentieth.'

Diana started. The twentieth! On that day she would be either made or marred.

'We propose to read the *Merchant of Venice*—or rather selections from it,' continued Mrs Fennimore. 'I want to give Faith the part of Portia; Veronica has already decided to be Shylock. You, Kathleen, will be Nerissa; and we must get a leading part for Diana.'

'Oh, please, not too leading a part, for I am not much good at that sort of thing!'

'Not much good, my dear! It isn't well to be overhumble,' said Mrs Fennimore. 'Has not report already told me of your magnificent success as Nausicaa in the *tableaux vivants* at Haredale?'

Diana felt a deep and almost ugly flush spreading over her delicate features. How proud she had been of the part which she had taken! But now she loathed it. Mrs Fennimore, however, thought that the girl's confusion proceeded from modesty, and liked her all the better for it.

They all talked together a little longer, and then the party broke up. As Diana was going back to the girls' private sitting-room she suddenly caught Kathleen by the arm.

'I don't really want to take any part in the *Merchant of Venice*,' she said.

'Oh, nonsense, Di! With your dramatic possibilities and talent, it would be too absurd for you not.—Wouldn't it, Faith?'

'Yes,' said Faith, speaking almost timidly. 'I wish you would take Portia; you would do her so splendidly.'

'No, no, Faith; you are to be Portia,' said Kathleen. 'You know what Miss Thomson said after you read the passage aloud in school this morning. She was so struck by your manner and mode of delivery that she told Mrs Fennimore, and no one else can possibly take the part.'

'I wouldn't be Portia for all creation,' said Diana; 'so you needn't suppose, Faith, that you are doing me a favour if you think of resigning it. If I must go in for these odious Shakespeare performances, I only trust I shall be given a very small part indeed.'

As they entered the girls' sitting-room the first person Diana saw was Sophy, who was curled up in an easy-chair in the most negligent attitude, devouring a story-book. She looked up as they all entered, and beckoned Diana to come towards her. Diana did not

take the slightest notice; she was certainly not going to be, whatever the result, at Sophy's beck and call. She seated herself, therefore, near her Cousin Faith, and, to Faith's amazement, asked her a few questions about her health.

'I am sorry you are ill, Faith,' she said. 'I thought when you came here with Kathleen you would be quite well.'

'I haven't been quite well for some time,' said Faith; 'but I am having a strong tonic now, and the doctor thinks I shall be much better before long.'

She spoke nervously. She was never altogether at her ease when talking with Diana. Between her and Diana there seemed ever and always to rise the image of dear old Mrs Mortimer—the old lady whom she had offended, whose heart she had won, to whom she had given her own heart, who had seemed for a very short time to take her mother's place in her young life. Even Kathleen could not soothe the sorrow which Faith felt at appearing ungrateful to one who had been good to her.

CHAPTER XXII.

A GREAT OLD PLACE.

MEANWHILE, with these various and exciting matters in progress, there was a very old lady living at Court Abbey who felt a strange sense of loneliness.

Court Abbey was a great old place, and at one time had been magnificently kept up. In the old, old days there had been horses innumerable in the stables, and carriages to take people here, there, and everywhere. There had been young people to fill the house with mirth and laughter, and older people to look on at the doings of the young. There had been cares and sorrows, as well as joys and delights, at Court Abbey. Money there had been in abundance, but amassing money had never been the aim of life in this fine old place.

The owner of Court Abbey had been looked on as a sort of liege lord by his numerous retainers. People in the village had looked up to him. He had been their comfort and stay in times of trouble; their confidant and delight in periods of joy. He had seen them married; he had been present at their funerals; he had been all in all to his numerous tenants.

But Mortimer of Court Abbey slept with his fathers. He had left no son to inherit the old place; and Mrs Mortimer, his lonely widow, lived now in a corner of the house which had once been so very gay. She had a suite of rooms arranged for herself in the south wing. These rooms were beautifully furnished, although in old-fashioned style. Here were to be found the most perfect specimens of Chippendale and Sheraton of their period; here were also to be found

enormous vases of real china straight from the Celestial Empire; little mandarins, most beautifully made, nodded at you on the mantelpiece; quaint figures and devices of all kinds were to be found in these beautiful ancient rooms. Mrs Mortimer hated anything new; she even liked her Turkey carpets to be faded. Of one thing she was particularly fond, and that was the sunshine. She had her windows open whenever possible, and the blinds up, to let in every gleam of sun; she liked to seat herself in the full blaze of the sun, and to be waited on by Bowden and the few faithful servants who were necessary to her very simple life.

When Mrs Mortimer hastily returned to Court Abbey she had undoubtedly received a shock—even a greater shock than poor Faith was suffering from. She was a very proud old lady, and her pride had been hurt in the most vulnerable part. She had taken a tremendous fancy to Faith, who reminded her of her dear dead daughter. She even liked Diana, notwithstanding her cold and stately ways. She was fond of all the Ludlows, as of friends whom she had known during the greater part of her life. But little Faith, with her pale face and sad gray eyes, interested her. She longed to draw the child out; she wanted to be good to her; and she had the happy dream of inviting her to come to Court Abbey to pay her a long, long visit, during which time she would see that Faith was taught, and would even herself help to teach her.

Mrs Mortimer was now a very old lady, but she had will and strength and determination of character; and, as she was perfectly healthy, the doctors said there was no reason why she should not live for many years more, always provided she did not suffer a shock.

Now it so happened that Mrs Mortimer had received a shock, and a very severe one. To see herself caricatured—caricatured to the life, and by the

girl she had been so specially fond of—tried her inexpressibly. She felt she could not stay even a day longer at Haredale; she must get back to her own quiet home. Young people were young people; but in her time they venerated and respected the old, and did not treat them as she had been treated by Faith —Faith King, of all people!

The poor old lady felt her heart getting very hard towards the girl for whom she had gone out of her way to be kind. Kathleen's intercession on Faith's behalf had no effect whatever on Mrs Mortimer. She thought little or nothing of the loss of her ring, but she thought a great deal of the humiliation to which she had been subjected; and nothing would induce her to see Faith—at least, not for the present. Mrs Mortimer was, in her way, just as proud as Diana. All the servants, all the visitors, all the family had seen what Faith had done, and great indeed was their indignation, for Mrs Mortimer was universally loved; but even to her faithful Bowden she could not speak of what had occurred.

On the morning after her arrival home she received the little signet-ring. She slipped it once more on her finger, but even the fact of having recovered what she much valued did not soothe her sorely troubled spirit.

Court Abbey was also situated in Yorkshire, but in a very distant part of the county from where Haredale was to be found.

On the very morning when Jacqueline received her letter from Diana, Mrs Mortimer was seated rather mournfully in the sunshine, looking at the splendid view which lay before her. But she was not thinking of the venerable trees, nor of the carefully kept lawns, nor of the distant hills, at that moment; she was thinking of a little girl who had first won her heart and then hurt her indescribably.

The thoughts of the old are very deep thoughts;

they cannot fritter them away as can the young and gay and foolish. The old have few distractions. They know that their time on earth is brief. When they love any one who does not belong to their own age they love in a very deep and sacred manner.

This was the sort of love that Mrs Mortimer had given to little Faith; and yet Faith, of all people in the world, had returned it as has been seen. Mrs Mortimer could not hate the girl; but she felt, at the same time, that she must turn her thoughts right away from her. She had made up her mind to do so on the night when the *tableau vivant* which was the caricature of herself had been presented to the assembled guests and servants at Haredale. But, try as she would, she could not turn her thoughts away. She kept twisting her signet-ring round and round her shrivelled old finger, and more and more did she think of Faith and of Faith alone.

Diana was a nice girl; Jacqueline was quite all right; but no one fitted into Mrs Mortimer's old heart as Faith had done until—— Well, she must think of her no more.

At this moment the door was opened softly by Bowden, who carried a visiting-card on a salver. 'A gentleman to see you, madam,' she said.

'But you know, Bowden, I don't receive,' replied Mrs Mortimer, raising her dark and still bright eyes to her faithful servant's face.

'He said he thought perhaps you would see him, madam. He will not keep you long.'

Mrs Mortimer looked at the name on the card. Then she started perceptibly, for the name was that of the Reverend Leonard King. Faith's father! What had Faith's father to do with her? She had never approved of Faith's mother marrying Mr King, but she had not been so keen against him as other members of the family. Still, she had no wish to see him, although she had met him a long time ago.

'The gentleman looks—if I may make so bold as to express an opinion—as though he 'd come a long way, and would like to have a chat with you, ma'am. And he 's little Miss Faith's father, is he not?'

'Yes, Bowden, of course he is; but you must know that that fact does not recommend him to me.'

'He seems a very nice sort of gentleman, all the same, madam.'

'Well, as he 's come so far I cannot decline to see him,' replied Mrs Mortimer. 'Show him up, Bowden. Only, you might just mention that I am not very strong and cannot stand a long interview.'

'I will, dear madam; and I will bring you your beef-tea presently.'

Bowden left the room. In a very few moments the door was opened, and the Reverend Leonard King was announced.

He came in, wearing his usual very shabby clothes and with his habitual stoop. His eyes looked somewhat short-sighted, and he screwed them a little together as he approached Mrs Mortimer.

'I have no right to pay this visit,' he said; 'but after Christmas I was very unwell, and the doctors ordered me a change—a change, I can assure you, I anything but wished for. Nevertheless, as I was told I must get away, I thought I would come to Yorkshire. My intention was to visit my child Faith.'

'Will you take a seat, Mr King?' said Mrs Mortimer.

She felt interested in the clergyman in spite of herself. He had a look of Faith, and he was very sincere; she noticed that in the expression of his eyes, the curve of his lips, the firmness of his chin. Yes; he had a great look of Faith, who also appeared sincere, but was not. Nevertheless the old lady was interested and roused out of herself.

Mr King took a chair not far from Mrs Mortimer. 'I am a very forgetful person,' he said, 'except in as

far as parochial matters are concerned. Anything to do with the Church, my Church, the Anglican Church that I love, is deeply engrafted in my mind. But outside things don't so much matter. And now I must confess something to you. I came to Yorkshire with the intention of surprising Faith, my child, by paying her a visit at Haredale, and it was not until I arrived in Yorkshire that I suddenly remembered that my dear girl was not quite well and had been sent to a school—I think either at Folkestone or Eastbourne—I really don't remember which.'

'Oh indeed!' said Mrs Mortimer. She had not heard that Faith had left Haredale.

'That being the case,' continued Mr King, 'I made up my mind to come here to see you, for I wanted to thank you for your very great kindness to my little girl. She has written me several letters since she went to Haredale, and they have all been full of you and your great kindness to her. You remember her mother. You—loved her mother, and for her mother's sake you were good to my very lonely child.'

'Yes, I think I was good to her, Leonard King,' replied Mrs Mortimer. Then she sat silent, not leaning back, but with the stiff, upright bearing of some very old ladies.

'I wanted to thank you in person,' said Mr King. 'I am the last person on earth to understand how to bring up a girl like Faith. She resembles me, and she resembles her mother. She is a very passionate, warm-hearted, loving girl, and needs the tender care and solace of a woman; she is old for her years, for she has never, until she joined the Ludlows, been with people about her own age. It was just like Faith to take to you. I can understand it. You will allow me to thank you? I have come all this way just to do so—to show you that I appreciate your kindness to my child, more particularly when I know that you have done it for my dear wife's sake. Margaret

Ludlow is an excellent woman, but she could not possibly understand one like Faith. Now, you can understand her. I cannot, either; but you can. I therefore thank you. I won't detain you any longer now.' He rose as he spoke.

Mrs Mortimer looked full up at him. Then she said, 'As you have come so far, will you stay a little longer?'

The Rector dropped again into the comfortable easy-chair. He was not close to his parishioners now, as he was when listening to Kathleen at the Savoy Hotel; his poor people might cry out for him in vain, but he could not get to them. He might, therefore, just as well be with Mrs Mortimer as with any one else. The richness of her home, the beauty of her surroundings, the dignity of her bearing, did not in the least impress him; but he liked the expression of her face, and he was really grateful to her for being good to Faith.

'As you have asked me to stay a little longer,' he said, 'I will do so with pleasure. Perhaps you can explain to me the reason why the Ludlows have suddenly banished Faith to school.'

'I did not know until you told me, Mr King, that they had done so.'

'You did not know!'

'I repeat it: I did not know.'

'It was Margaret Ludlow's idea,' continued Mr King, 'that Faith should be brought up with her own girls at Haredale. She objected to schools and to school-life for young girls, and told me that her firm intention was to bring up her young people at home. She offered Faith a home and every consideration. But all of a sudden, and just during my busy week after Christmas, she and a very charming young girl—I really forget her name—asked me to call at the Savoy Hotel, and there they told me that they thought it would be well for Faith to leave Haredale and go

to school—somewhere on the south coast—I really can't remember the name of the place. I suppose Faith herself will write and tell me. Faith was to go; also one of the Ludlow girls—I forget their names. I am a very forgetful sort of person except where my parishioners are concerned.'

'They must have given you *some* reason for wishing to send your daughter away from Haredale—and to school!' said Mrs Mortimer.

'Oh yes; they said she was not well. The fact is, Faith has not been well since her mother's death. She has taken that affliction from the Almighty in what I consider a rather rebellious spirit; she has not been sweet or resigned on the subject. Who could miss my beloved wife more than I have done? But Faith, I could see, was fretting terribly, and she frets still. You must have noticed it—you, who are her friend?'

'I was her friend,' said Mrs Mortimer in a steady voice.

'What do you mean by that? You speak as though your friendship were of the past.'

'Well, Mr King, you have come to see me; you have come uninvited, and I do not see why I should not mention a subject to you that I have not spoken of to any one else.'

'Certainly, my dear madam.'

'And I must ask you to regard it as confidential.'

'Undoubtedly,' said the Reverend Leonard King; but he twisted a little restlessly in his chair. 'Has it anything to do with Faith?'

'It has everything to do with your little daughter.'

'Then, of course, I shall be interested.'

'I will tell you just what I thought of her and what I now think of her. She was to me, when I arrived at Haredale to spend Christmas with my old friends the Ludlows, a most lovable and indeed delightful child. I took a tremendous fancy to her.

I did this, in the first instance, for her mother's sake; for although Faith resembles you, she has also a great look of her beloved and dear mother.'

Mr King bowed. 'It is true,' he said, 'although she will never attain to her mother's beauty.'

'I am afraid she won't,' said Mrs Mortimer. 'But when speaking of her mother, I was thinking not so much of her beauty of feature as of her great and rare beauty of character. I much fear, Mr King, that the point of difference between your daughter and her mother lies in the character.'

Mr King was certainly startled, and showed his feelings by a glow of colour which suffused his care-worn face. 'Yes, yes,' he said; 'yes, yes. You found fault with my little girl?'

'I will tell you what I have not breathed to any one. Faith was all that I could desire: she was most sympathetic, most affectionate, a most winsome little girl. I loved to have her with me. I had arranged, in my own mind, to ask her to come and stay with me for some time here.'

'And of course she could have come. I should have been delighted,' said Mr King.

'I believed that it was in my power to make her happy,' continued Mrs Mortimer; 'but when I assure you that all these things are changed, and when I give you the reason you must bear your sorrow as best you can. There were a number of young people staying at Haredale, and Faith, of course, was with them. I saw she was with them, although I really never thought she was one of them. She did not seem to take to any of them in particular—unless it was to a very nice Irish girl, Kathleen MacMahon'——

'Ah yes!' said Mr King, raising his eyebrows; 'that was the name of the girl who talked to me at the Savoy.'

'With the exception of that girl, Faith was not making friends very easily; but of course, as far as

I was concerned, I was rather pleased, for she used to come to me at all hours; and just her sweet little voice, and her gentle way, and her agreeable presence, and her sympathy made her a charming companion.'

It seemed to Mr King as Mrs Mortimer spoke that he also had a remembrance of a time when those young arms were flung round his neck, and he felt the softness of that round young cheek pressed against his; and he realised, as he had never realised before, that he was lonely without Faith.

'Yes,' he said, 'you have described her very accurately. That is precisely what she is.'

Mrs Mortimer almost sat up in her chair. 'I have described your daughter, Mr King, exactly as she is *not*. Now, pray, listen. On the last night of the old year the young people of Haredale gave an entertainment to their guests. The village folk were invited to attend, and, in addition to the visitors staying in the house, most of the surrounding gentry; in short, there were nearly two hundred people assembled in the old hall. You perhaps do not know Haredale, but the hall is a remarkable feature of the house.'

Mr King tried very hard at that moment not to think of the most suitable text for his next Sunday's sermon.

'Yes,' he said, 'an entertainment on the last night of the year. It seems to me, if you will forgive me, rather a time for reflection than for—for mere amusement.'

'Be that as it may,' said Mrs Mortimer, 'there was an entertainment given, and no pains or expense were spared to render it as successful as possible. The great thing was this: the young people were to manage it alone, and they arranged that the entertainment was to consist of charades and *tableaux vivants*.'

'Acting—acting! Very bad indeed!' said Mr King.

'Well, no; I don't agree with you, sir. But we

each have our views on such matters. When I was a girl I was exceedingly fond of taking a part in a well-arranged charade, and in forming part of a picture in a set of *tableaux vivants*. And I helped the girls all I could, as I happened to have several trunks of old-world dresses, which were sent to me to Haredale from here. Faith was in and out of my room constantly; and so was Diana—the girl who, I presume, is now at school with Faith; and so were Kathleen and the others.

'The night of the entertainment arrived, and all went well. People were delighted with the parts that the young actors took. I need not describe them to you, need I?'

'You certainly need not,' said Mr King, now preparing deliberately to rise from his chair.

'One moment, sir. I have not spoken of this to a soul; but you, as Faith's father, ought to know. There was a very beautiful tableau in which Diana Ludlow represented Nausicaa, that most lovely Greek maiden. We thought that was the last tableau, and were all delighted, for no one could have looked more lovely than she did. Then there was a little hush and a pause. The curtain was again raised, and who should appear before the spectators but—your daughter, sir; your daughter—Faith!'

'Yes!' said Mr King, wondering at the extreme brightness in the old lady's eyes.

'She did her part well,' continued Mrs Mortimer—'so well that no one could for a single moment miss the point; and the point, Mr King, was—*me!* Your daughter Faith appeared as *me*—before the assembled guests. She wore my clothes; she imitated my stoop; her face was got up to resemble the face of old age. No one could mistake it for a moment. And she wore this ring on her finger, sir.' Here Mrs Mortimer pointed to her signet-ring. 'She caricatured me, sir; yes—*me*. Now you know the

best and the worst of your daughter Faith. I was kind to her, and she exposed me to ridicule. It is very hard to bear ridicule when you are old—when your day is almost done; it would be hard to bear it from any one, but it is harder still to bear it from one you have loved.'

Mr King got up hastily. He did not speak for a minute. Then he said with abruptness, 'I will inquire into this. The whole thing is so absolutely unlike Faith that I cannot believe for a single moment that she did it of her own free will.'

'She did it, sir; there is no getting over that fact. I have no doubt whatever that she was repentant afterwards, and that her repentance probably caused her illness; but the fact remains that she deprived me at once of a dear young friend and of a very treasured illusion, for I thought she was like her mother, and I found she was not.'

'I am sorry for you, Mrs Mortimer; but I am grateful to you for telling me the whole truth. You have my solemn word that I will not repeat anything of this except, and only, in as far as it is necessary to clear up the mystery. I don't believe that I know my little Faith as well as you know her; but I do know *this* about her—that to take willingly such a part as she took, to willingly grieve one whom she could write about as she wrote about you, is impossible to the child. However, you have confided in me now, and I am glad you have done so. I will say good-day.'

'You will remember your promise?' said Mrs Mortimer.

The Rector bowed. 'Certainly,' he said, and left the room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A GREAT DILEMMA.

WHEN Jacqueline received Diana's letter she was perhaps more astonished than she had ever been in her life.

There are two kinds of girls in the world: there are the girls who never have any money of their own simply because there is no money for them to have, and there are the girls who have no money of their own because everything is provided for them, as they are considered far too young to have charge of money—they would not know how to spend it wisely.

The Ludlow girls belonged to the latter class. Beyond a very moderate supply of pocket-money for small expenses, everything was provided for them, and they did not give money a thought. In their rich and luxurious home, to ask was to have; but they never had asked for money. Jacqueline was, therefore, by no means in a position to lend Diana such a large sum as thirty pounds.

She was much amazed as she read her sister's letter. She was most anxious to help her, but did not know what she was to do. She could have gone to her mother, who could easily have drawn her a cheque for the amount; at the same time she would most certainly not have done so without knowing what the money was for. It would have been quite useless to consult Sir Charles on the subject. And yet Jacky must do something. Her dear little, honest face was quite puckered up with anxiety. She could not imagine what was the matter with Diana. There was no doubt that Di was thoroughly unhappy.

Miss Price watched her pupil during morning lessons,

but was far too wise to say anything. Miss Price had been rather hurt at Diana being suddenly taken from her care. But the post of governess at Haredale was too good to lose; and she therefore did her utmost with Jacqueline, and also offered to teach Patty and Gerty their baby-lessons.

When school was over that morning Miss Price and Jacqueline went for a walk. Jacqueline knew that this was her opportunity, for Diana had impressed upon her the absolute necessity of sending the money by return of post.

'Pricy darling!' she said.

'Well, Jacqueline, and what is troubling you?'

'I've had a horrid letter from dear old Di.'

'You ought not to speak of your sister in those terms. Diana has faults, I admit; but I don't think she could write what you call a horrid letter.'

'Well, I mean it was a miserable letter. It was a bothered sort of letter, as though she scarcely knew what she was doing.'

'Jacqueline, dear child, those expressions are not pretty.'

'Oh, sometimes,' said Jacqueline, tossing back her mane of curly black hair, 'one can't only think of pretty expressions! I tell you what—I'll just show you the letter; she trusts you and she trusts me. And when you have read it you will know what to do and how to help me—or rather how to help her; for she must have help, poor sweet pet! and to-day, if possible.'

Jacqueline took her sister's letter out of her pocket and gave it to Miss Price. Miss Price was quite one of the family. She loved the girls as though they were her own, and their secrets would never be revealed by her.

She was not long in making herself acquainted with the contents of Diana's letter. But, truth to be told, she was much startled.

'Well,' said Jacqueline, fixing her big black eyes on her governess's face, 'can you do it, Pricy—can you?'

'That is just the sad part of it, dear. I cannot possibly do it.'

'Oh Pricy, Pricy!'

'I can't, my love; and even if I could, I doubt very much if I would. A rich girl like Diana has no right to be at school for only a few days and get into debt to the tune of thirty pounds. The sum in itself is nothing to a girl in Diana's position; nevertheless it is a very large sum for those not belonging to her to lend her, and'——

'Oh, you will do it, Pricy! She said she'd pay you back at Easter. You know you will get it all back then. You will lend her the money and save her—poor, poor dear Di!'

'I was away at Christmas,' said Miss Price, 'and I understand that very queer things went on here then.'

'It was only that Faith disappointed us and got ill afterwards, and was taken up by Kathleen MacMahon, who used to be Di's friend, while Nora was mine; and then father and mother decided to send Faith to school.'

'But Faith did more than disappoint you—she did something wrong at Christmas.'

'That is true, and I can't understand it,' said Jacqueline. 'I agree with Kathleen that some influence must have been brought to bear on her to make her do what she did. I am afraid dear Mrs Mortimer is hurt for life.'

'And now Diana wants thirty pounds. It doesn't look nice at all,' said Miss Price.

'But can you lend it to her, Pricy dear, and get her to explain everything when she comes back at Easter?'

'My dear child, I would gladly if I could; that is, I would if I thought it right, which I rather doubt.

But the question of right or wrong cannot come into this business, for I haven't got thirty pounds in the world to lend to any one. I have been helping my people at home a good bit during this Christmas, and what little money I have saved is invested in such a way that I cannot possibly draw it out in a hurry. So, my dear Jacqueline—oh, don't cry, darling!—I can't do what Diana wants.'

'But you can sell her jewels. You remember the wonderful old Indian filigree gold ornaments? She said if you could not lend the money you could sell the jewels. She said you would know what they would fetch. She wants the money at once; but of course if she is quite sure it is coming she will be contented. I might write to her by this post to say that you are taking the jewels to London and will sell them. Or you could even take them to York—that isn't at all far—and sell them there.'

'No, dear child, I cannot do it.'

'Pricy, Pricy! And when Di is in such trouble!'

'But, Jacqueline, I could not possibly do anything underhand. If I had the money I should be very doubtful with regard to the expediency of lending it to Diana unknown to her parents; but I haven't got the money, so matters must rest in abeyance.'

'But the jewels, Pricy—Diana's own jewels!'

'My dear child, Diana is not of age; until she is, they don't really belong to her, and nothing would induce me to be a party to her selling them.'

'Then am I to do nothing?'

'Let us walk a little faster, Jacqueline. I have something to say to you. On the day after my return your mother and I had a long talk. She explained to me as well as she could, dear lady, all about Diana's going to school and her keen disappointment in poor little Faith. Then she asked me to collect all Diana's jewels and valuables and bring them to her to put away in the safe in her room. I naturally

did so; therefore I have neither the money to lend, nor can I possibly get the filigree gold ornaments to sell for her without letting Lady Ludlow know.'

'Then what am I to do?' said Jacqueline.

'The only thing I can suggest is that you confide in your mother; she is the right person to speak to. Either that, or write straight to Diana and tell her to do so. There is no use in having concealments of this sort; they burden one all one's life long and make one truly miserable. So I think, my dear child, the only thing for you to do is to write to Diana and tell her that the fit person to help her is her mother—or, if not her mother, her father.'

'Oh dear! oh dear!' said Jacqueline. 'I did think you'd help! I am sure she must have got into some awful scrape, though I can't make out what it can be, or she wouldn't have written as she has done. Still, I suppose there's no help for it; and if you will let me, dear Pricy, I'll turn back now and write at once to Di.'

'You are doing quite right, Jacqueline.'

The two retraced their steps to the house, and there Jacqueline sat down and wrote a letter to her sister.

'Dearest Di,—I have done my best, and my best means nothing at all. Pricy is very sorry for you; but, at the same time, she is—well, she's rather shocked, although she's one of the greatest darlings in the world. I think I could have coaxed her to lend you the money—although I'd have had a hard job—if the poor dear had it to lend. But she hasn't got it. Her people—you know how she's worried by her people—got a lot out of her at Christmas, and what little else she has is invested somewhere and she can't draw it out; so there's no good whatever in thinking of Pricy as a help in time of need. Then I suggested the Indian jewels; but, my dear, you can't have them either, for mother talked to Pricy the day

after she came back, and asked her to fetch all your jewels out of your drawers in order that she might lock them up in the safe in her bedroom. So there, my dear Di, I can't help you one little bit! At the present moment I have ten shillings, and not another farthing. I am sure if that were any good you should have it with the greatest pleasure; but as it happens to be only one-sixtieth part of thirty pounds I don't see what use it can be. Pricy suggests that you should write boldly to father or mother and tell why you want the money. She hasn't the smallest doubt that when you do that they will send it to you and everything will be all right. Pricy thinks it a perfectly awful thing for a girl of your age to begin life with a sort of secret on her mind, and I dare say she is right. Anyhow, your letter has made me frightfully uncomfortable, and I sha'n't know any rest until I hear from you again.

'Of course we miss you like anything at home, and so do we miss Faith. I do trust that you and Faith are becoming real friends, for she is a sweet girl; and Miss Price and I both agree that she could not have caricatured Mrs Mortimer without being put up to it by some one, though who that some one could be I can't imagine.

'Well, I must stop now or I sha'n't catch the post. I wish with all my heart I could have done what you asked; but you see I can't, nor can darling Pricy. —Your ever-loving sister, JACQUELINE.'

This letter was received by Diana on the following morning. It was now the sixteenth of the month, therefore there were only four days left. The girls' letters were always put on their plates at breakfast; and Diana seeing one in Jacqueline's handwriting, put it hastily aside. Sophy had also seen the letter and recognised the handwriting; her greeny-gray eyes gleamed with expectancy and hope. But Diana

would not even look at her; she held herself very erect and looked prouder than ever.

The school was very much excited about the first Shakespeare rehearsal, and Faith was in demand for her undoubted talent for histrionic display. Her Portia would be exceptionally good; and as there were very few days now until the twentieth, the girls were expected to rehearse in the afternoons.

Diana was not the girl to show her feelings if she could avoid it. The other girls were quietly reading their letters. There was very little restraint at the school, which was made as home-like as possible. When the lessons were going on, they had to be attended to with all diligence; but when lessons were in abeyance the girls had a fairly free time, and were allowed to talk and read their letters and enjoy themselves as though they were in their own homes.

Sophy was longing for Diana to read her letter; but as she was placed at the far end of the long breakfast-table she had no chance of making any observation about it, and it lay for a time near Diana's plate. Then she slipped it into her pocket, and the whole school went out for a few minutes to enjoy the fresh air before the work of the day began. Had Sophy not been present Diana would certainly have opened her letter, for she was quite as anxious as Sophy to know what it contained. She had raised quite a pinnacle of hope in her heart on the certainty that Jacqueline would be able to help her. Beyond doubt Jacqueline would send her the small sum required, and all would be well. Notwithstanding, it would be nice to know—to get the thing settled once and for all. But as Sophy kept watching her, Diana would not dream of gratifying that young person's curiosity by reading her letter in her presence.

School was always over at half-past eleven, and then the girls who wished it could go to their rooms for a short time. It was during this recess that

Diana opened her sister's letter and read its contents. She read them for the first time in a state of bewilderment, shaking out the letter to find the expected cheque or bank-notes; and then again a second time, with only a dim sort of understanding; and a third time, with the full realisation of what it all meant.

Pricy could not help her; the jewels were secure in her mother's keeping. What was to be done? The only pleasure poor Diana felt at that moment was the thought of the keen disappointment which she would inflict upon Sophy Ross. If things would be bad for herself on the twentieth, they would be even worse for Sophy. Sophy must manage to get out of her own scrape. Still, matters were undoubtedly most horrid for her. There was no one in the school to whom she could possibly appeal for help. Diana gave an almost satirical laugh. It did seem ridiculous that she—Diana Ludlow, the rich young heiress of Haredale—should be at her wits' end to secure so paltry a sum as thirty pounds! Nevertheless, such was the state of affairs.

She went downstairs after a time, and in the course of the afternoon sauntered up to Sophy. Sophy was standing alone and evidently waiting for Diana. She half-opened her lips, half-stretched out her hand, and looked eagerly at Diana. Diana laughed softly.

'I am sorry to disappoint you, Sophy Ross,' she said. 'I did what I could about that money; but, although I shall be a rich girl eventually, I haven't got thirty pounds now, and see no possible way of getting it. I wrote to Jacqueline, who cannot help me. There 's no use whatever, therefore, in depending on me.'

'Oh, very well,' said Sophy. She turned first white and then slightly green.

'That is about all,' said Diana.

'Then on the twentieth of the month,' said Sophy, dropping her voice, 'we both fall together: you, the

great Diana of the Ephesians—you will forgive the reference, won't you?—and I, poor, commonplace little Sophy Ross. Kathleen will of course have to be called in, and Faith will be placed on a jolly big pedestal. Nice for us both, won't it?'

Diana did not speak.

Sophy, meanwhile, was thinking things out as hard as ever her active brain could work. If there was any possible way by which she could avoid being expelled from the school she would certainly use that way. She remembered her friend—that commonplace, dull girl Harriet Parr. Harriet had promised to give her her necklet—which she, Sophy, happened to know was of considerable value—on the understanding that she was asked to spend Easter at Haredale. Sophy glanced full at Diana.

'Di likes it just as little as I do,' she said to herself; 'in fact, if anything, she likes it less than I do, for she was the moving spirit. It was she who thought of it all. It won't be so bad leaving the school if Kathleen has to go—for Kathleen won't get out of it either, although she didn't behave so very badly. At any rate, the mighty Diana—the great Diana Ludlow—will go, and so shall I.—Look here, Di,' she said, 'I 'm really awfully sorry you can't get that money; but you don't want to be exposed, disgraced, have everything told, in four days' time?'

'Don't talk so loud!' replied Diana.

Sophy had raised her voice rather louder than usual, but she was by no means wanting in common-sense. She wished to frighten Diana as much as possible, and she knew at this moment there was no one near enough to hear what she said. She dropped her voice, therefore, and said quietly, 'Shall we walk in the shrubbery for a short time?'

The shrubbery was a tiny patch of ground on one side of the school. It was very pretty and shady and pleasant in summer, but at this time of year it

was damp and dull. Diana felt inclined to turn up her aristocratic nose.

'Oh, just as you please, of course,' said Sophy, again raising her voice. 'We shall be quiet in the shrubbery, that's all; and of course, as we are both in this very disagreeable scrape, we are bound to cling together in order to prevent a fall.

> Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
> All the king's horses and all the king's men
> Could not put Humpty Dumpty together again!'

'I do wish you wouldn't talk such utter rubbish!' said Diana in a cross voice.

'All right, my dear; all right. After all, this catastrophe, when it occurs, will be worse for you than for me.'

Diana looked fixedly at Sophy.

'I am bitterly sorry—bitterly sorry,' she said then, 'that I ever trusted you. I am more sorry than I have words to explain at the thought of what I did. I can only think I must have been mad at the time.'

'Mad or sane,' remarked Sophy, 'you have to get out of it now as best you can.'

'And you have fully made up your mind, Sophy Ross, after my kindness to you, and after my inviting you to spend Christmas with us at Haredale, to drag me into this matter just because you owe a horrid dressmaker a bill?'

In reply to this Sophy stretched out her hand, took one of Diana's, and dragged her quickly in the direction of the damp shrubbery.

'Why do you rush me into this horrid place?' said the other girl angrily.

'Because if we hadn't hurried just at that moment Miss Thomson would have come out and seen us, and Mrs Fennimore does not particularly like our wandering in the shrubbery in the winter. Now we are safe—quite safe—here, and have about ten minutes

to ourselves. We must make the very most of those ten minutes.'

'I see,' remarked Diana, 'that you have got something at the back of your head, Sophy.'

'And you see right. All my future depends on this little matter, and I rather fancy a good deal of yours depends on the very same thing; for it wouldn't be nice by-and-by—when you are in society, for instance, and looked up to and admired and made a fuss about because you are an heiress and all the rest—it wouldn't be nice, I say, to have people whisper together and remark, "She's the girl who was expelled from Kendal House, one of the most celebrated private schools in England."'

'It would be intolerable—it couldn't be endured!' said Diana, suddenly giving way to her true feelings and grasping Sophy's hand with tenacity. 'Sophy—is there no way out?'

'I see you are determined to fight for your own hand.'

'I have no hand to fight for, or you may be certain I would. Still, I am prepared to listen to your scheme.'

'Do you know a girl here called Harriet Parr?'

'I can't say I do; there are such a lot of new girls, and as I am one of the newest myself I can't be expected to remember all their names.'

'Well, Harriet's a right good sort, and she's as rich as a Jew. And now I will tell you what I can do if you will help me.'

'I certainly can't ask Harriet Parr to lend me thirty pounds, for I don't even know her,' said Diana.

'Of course you can't, goosey! Whoever expected you would? But I tell you what she will do. She is as rich as ever she can be. I think her mother must be a Jewess; but I really don't know, and I don't care. Anyhow, she has more ornaments and trinkets and articles of value than any other girl in

the school. Girls like you, Diana, don't bring their valuable ornaments to school, for Mrs Fennimore doesn't approve of their being worn. Well, now, here's the kernel inside the nut, and you've got to listen with all your might and main. If you don't know Harriet that by no means proves that Harriet doesn't know you. Harriet was very much excited about you when you arrived, and asked me dozens of questions, and was as jealous as ever she could be when she heard that I had been spending Christmas at Haredale. In fact, here's the whole thing, Di, and you can take it or leave it: Harriet has promised to make me a present of a necklet of hers—a very valuable necklet, too, set in the very finest gold and with some lovely large turquoises—provided I can induce you to ask her to spend Easter at Haredale. You know I am going, and it will be quite easy for her to accompany me. I can easily sell the necklet, or give it to Madame Michel, who will, I am sure, give me a receipt in full for that horrid little bill of hers. Harriet has a great deal of common-sense; and although she doesn't care twopence about jewels—you see, she's not a scrap good-looking; she's not the sort of girl you would take to (nor I myself, for that matter) except in an emergency like the present—she's as sharp as a needle, and she won't part with her necklet unless she is invited first to Haredale. Now, of course your father and mother won't refuse to allow her to come; so all you have to do is to see her this minute, and just put on some of your pretty, graceful manners—in short, *give her an invitation.* Of course you are not to pretend for a single moment that you know anything about the necklet. You give the invitation, I get the necklet, Madame Michel is paid, and we are as right as rain. Now, isn't that a clever way of getting out of a scrape? And am I such a dreadfully bad little Sophy after all?'

Diana stood and considered.

'Come along,' said Sophy; 'this isn't a time for wasting moments. And there's Harriet walking all by herself on the gravel path at the far end of the garden. You must just be awfully nice to her, and you must ask her if she is a relation of the Parrs of The Priory in Cumberland. She is, of course, and she's frightfully proud of it. Anyhow, you must speak about that, and say something nice about me, and something nice about her, and give her your invitation. Now come along, Di—do! There isn't a second to be lost.'

'You are clever,' said Diana.

'It is beastly, of course—most beastly; but of two evils, choose the least, say I,' remarked Sophy. 'And you needn't be bothered with her while she's at Haredale, for I'll promise to take the care of her more or less off your shoulders. Now, then, here we are!'

Once again Diana—the stately, the proud, the girl with that incomparable air of good-breeding, found herself almost hurled along at Sophy's bidding. They drew up beside Harriet Parr, who was leaning over the parapet and looking gloomily at the sea-waves. She was a girl who did not care in the very least for Nature or its beauties; but she was intensely ambitious, and wished to be in the best set in the school. She could not understand why Sophy, who was so poor, should be in that set, and why she, Harriet, who was so very rich, should be left out. She was greatly struck by Diana's appearance. Diana's haughty bearing impressed her most favourably. But she was so much absorbed in her thoughts that she did not hear the girls' approach until Sophy's sharp little 'Hallo! what are you thinking about, Harrie?' sounded on her ears. She turned abruptly, and found herself confronting both Sophy and Diana.

'Harriet,' said Sophy, 'I have brought my friend, Miss Ludlow of Haredale, to introduce her to you. I

have done so by special request.—Diana, this is my great friend, Harriet Parr.—Harriet, my very great friend, Diana Ludlow.'

Harriet made an awkward bow.

Diana held out the tips of her slender fingers. 'How do you do?' she said icily.

'This won't do at all!' thought Sophy to herself. 'Unless the mighty Di unbends a trifle, even Harriet will see through things and won't let me have the trinket.'

'You know the Parrs of The Priory in Cumberland, don't you, Diana?' she said.

'Yes, of course I know them,' said Diana.

Harriet's sallow face flushed a dull red. 'They are my cousins,' she said.

'They are very nice girls,' said Diana.

'They often visit you at Haredale, don't they?' said Sophy. She longed to give Diana a nudge, but Diana would not have taken the hint.

'I have also often stayed at The Priory,' said Diana after a pause. 'When I see the Parrs next I will mention to them that I have seen you. What do you say your name is?'

'Harriet. I am only a distant cousin; they may not remember much about me.'

'But you are a cousin, you know, dear,' said Sophy; 'and any one would be proud to be connected with the Parrs of The Priory.'

'Oh yes, I am a cousin,' said Harriet, recovering herself.

'And you'd like very much to see your relations, wouldn't you?' continued Sophy.

'Yes; but I never have the chance,' said Harriet. 'We all live in London, and I don't see the smallest likelihood of my cousins the Parrs inviting me down to Cumberland.'

'Diana has invited me to Yorkshire for Easter,' said Sophy.

'If you, Miss Parr, would like to accompany Sophy, I think father and mother would be quite pleased,' said Diana. 'I should have to ask them, of course; but that would be only a matter of form.'

'Of course, only barely a matter of form,' said Sophy.

'Yes,' continued Diana, 'for they always allow us to have a certain number of young friends with us during the holidays.'

'I should love to go to you—I should just love it!' said Harriet; and she raised her dull, good-natured, and yet withal honest eyes, and fixed them on Diana's face.

'She is a terrible girl, but she is worth twenty of Sophy,' thought Diana to herself.—'Very well,' she said after a pause; 'then we'll consider it settled, only I must warn you that we're rather a quiet party.'

'A quiet party!' cried Harriet. 'But you don't know what it would be to me to find myself in one of the stately homes of Old England. I know we are very rich; but we are not rich in that great, beautiful way. We'd give a great deal if we were; but we are not. I know I should love to go; and I think you are awfully kind, Miss Ludlow.'

'You must really call her Diana,' said Sophy. 'You know perfectly well, Harriet, it's the custom at our school for all the girls to call each other by their Christian names.'

'If—if—Diana doesn't mind,' said Harriet, her face glowing with gratification and pleasure.

'No, I don't mind. I shall be quite glad to see you,' said Diana; 'and when I write home I will just mention to my mother that you and Sophy are both coming.'

'Oh, it'll be lovely!' said Harriet. 'I scarcely know how to thank you.'

'I will tell you, Harriet, all about the pleasures of

Haredale,' said Sophy.—'Di, you are a brick! and I know you will like dear old Harrie, for she is a right-down good sort.'

'Well, I must be going into the house now,' said Diana; and she moved slowly away, leaving the two girls staring at each other.

'It can't be true!' said Harriet. 'How did you manage it, Sophy? Sophy, you are a genius!'

'I told you I could manage it, and I have,' said Sophy. 'You have got your invitation; and now, of course, you will do what you promised?'

'What I promised!' said Harriet, speaking in rather a startled voice. 'But I quite forget what I *did* promise.'

'Oh, you are a goose, Harriet! Don't you remember the trinket—the necklet?'

'*That!*' said Harriet. 'Of course I will give it to you! I'll run and fetch it this very minute. Stay where you are, Sophy, and I'll bring it down to you in less than no time.'

'You must be very quick about it,' said Sophy; 'for we'll all have to return to the house almost immediately, and I don't want any one to see that you have, as it were, paid me for your invitation.'

'Does *she* know?' asked Harriet, suddenly pausing and looking full at her companion.

'Of course she doesn't,' replied Sophy, who did not hesitate at such a crucial moment to tell a determined lie.

'She is perfectly beautiful,' said Harriet. 'I know I shall adore her. And we really *are* distantly related to the Parrs of The Priory. Father and old Mr Parr are second cousins, only Mr Parr is poor compared to father; but Mr Parr has the old family place and the blue blood in his veins, and father'——

'Oh, never mind about him now; do go and fetch that—trinket!' said Sophy. And Harriet went.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DANGER SIGNALS.

AS the days went on Diana began to find herself in a somewhat curious position in the school. Notwithstanding her coldness and her icy manner to most of the girls, she was much admired. People used to pause to look at her and make comments about her; and Diana enjoyed the fact that eyes of admiration were fixed on her face, and that voices took a subdued and even deferential tone when they addressed her.

Sophy managed to whisper to her that Madame Michel's debt was paid, and that Diana had therefore nothing more to fear. When Diana received this good piece of news she settled down most comfortably at school, wrote a line to Jacqueline to say that she had managed without borrowing thirty pounds, begged of Jacqueline to tear up her letter and to impress upon Miss Price the necessity of silence, and then tried to do her utmost to enjoy her new life.

There was a great deal in that life which a girl with Diana's capabilities would enjoy, although there was at the same time a vast amount in it which must rouse her natural pride and jealousy. There were some girls at Kendal House who admired her greatly because she was lovely to look at, and because she was Miss Ludlow of Haredale; but there were others, again, who thought nothing at all of these facts—who simply did not care whether she was rich or poor, high or low in this world's estimation.

Amongst the band of girls who thought very little indeed of Diana's beauty and queenly grace were

Veronica Dacre and Kathleen and Nora MacMahon. As to Faith, she would have given a great deal to be friendly once again with her cousin. But she was bewildered at what had occurred; and as no light had been given her to enable her to realise the strange situation in which she was placed before she left Haredale, she was very shy of Diana, and avoided her as much as possible.

Now, Diana, although she was forced to keep up a semblance of friendship with Sophy and a very faint semblance of friendship with Harriet, found neither girl at all to her taste. The relief, however, of not being dragged into public disgrace was so great that she could forgive a great deal to any one who had helped her out of the scrape in which she so nearly found herself.

The twentieth arrived, and on that day the first Shakespeare reading was to take place. There were only a certain number of characters from the well-known *Merchant of Venice* who were to appear on the little stage, and Diana was very much annoyed to find what a small part was given to her. She had begun by wishing to have a small part; but now that her mind was relieved with regard to other matters she no longer desired this, but wanted to distinguish herself as much as possible. On the day of the rehearsal, however, Mrs Fennimore sent for Diana.

'I want to speak to you, my child,' she said. 'The part you were to take to-night in the *Merchant of Venice* is not going to be played. We are making the whole thing a play, more or less, amongst four or five of the principal characters—namely, Portia, whom your Cousin Faith will personate, and she will act it remarkably well; then there is Shylock, whom Kathleen MacMahon will represent; and Nerissa —Nerissa will be played by Veronica Dacre, and Antonio and Bassanio by two of our best actors. On the occasion of our next reading you will certainly

have a part, Diana; and I am sorry to disappoint you to-night, but it cannot be helped.'

Diana expressed absolute indifference, which, however, she was very far from feeling. She said to herself, 'I am being treated in this school as I never expected my father's and mother's daughter would have been treated anywhere, and I am just exceedingly angry about it.'

As she left Mrs Fennimore's presence, Harriet, who was standing near, said, 'I am longing to see you when you take part in the acting this evening, Diana.'

'But I am not going to take any part,' replied Diana.

'Oh,' said Harrie, 'what a pity! And you would do it so beautifully! Sophy told me how simply magnificent you were as Nausicaa in one of the *tableaux vivants* at Haredale. It does seem cruel; it's a positive shame!'

Harriet spoke in a very honest tone, and Diana felt her heart quite warming towards this otherwise dull girl.

The evening arrived. The young actors took their places; the stage curtain was raised; and the little play, carefully prepared beforehand by Mrs Fennimore herself, won cheer after cheer from those who looked on. Faith, who always had a wonderful gift for acting, took the part of Portia to perfection; and Diana's angry eyes, as they fixed themselves upon her cousin's face, could not disturb the young actress in this moment of her triumph. Kathleen, however, dressed to represent Shylock, and doing the part splendidly, observed the angry light in Diana's eyes, and felt more than ever determined that Faith should be a great success. She played up to Faith in the most wonderful way, and helped her more than the girl was at all aware of.

Just as the acting was coming to an end there was

a little commotion in the great hall, and an elderly-looking man with a slight stoop was seen to thread his way amongst the guests and sit down in an obscure corner. Faith did not see him; had she done so her acting would have been quite destroyed for the time being. But Kathleen recognised him at a glance; he was Mr King. Why had Mr King come suddenly to Eastbourne to see Faith take the part of Portia?

Kathleen had a queer sensation in her heart that there was mischief afoot, and could not quite realise what was going to happen. Up to the present, things had been peaceful enough in the school; but Kathleen was sure that Mr King would not put himself out of the way to visit Eastbourne and his daughter except for a grave reason. The present moment, however, was all-important; and Kathleen managed very cleverly to intercept the view of Mr King from his daughter's gaze, so that the girl was able to go on with her very brilliant piece of acting until the close. Then, when cheer after cheer filled the hall, and the young actors were requested to come before the curtain, Faith, in her beautiful dress as Portia, raised her large dark-gray eyes and saw her father looking at her. She gave a cry, half of pleasure, half of pain, and the next minute, forgetting everything else in the world, had flown down, just as she was, into the midst of the audience, flung her arms around the Reverend Leonard King's neck, and began to kiss him again and again.

'Oh daddy! Oh dad! I *am* glad to see you!'

'Now, my dear Faith, pray restrain your violence. You took that part very well, and Portia is a beautiful character; and though I do not approve of theatricals as a rule, one must draw the line at Shakespeare. The *Merchant of Venice* is a beautiful play, and I was pleased to see how you had profited, my child, by your dear mother's teaching. How often—how

very often—I have heard you both reciting Shylock and Portia together!'

'Oh daddy, never mind about the play now! I *am* glad to see you!' cried the girl; and again the soft young lips pressed the withered cheek, while the rest of the girls looked on in some astonishment.

'I have come here on some special and very important business, Faith, my dear child, and wish to have an interview with your head-mistress. What did you say her name was?'

'Fennimore—dear Mrs Fennimore. She is here. I will take you at once and introduce you.'

'Do so, my dear; and if I can have a talk with her to-night I may be able to return to London by the last train. My work grows heavier and heavier, Faith, and I dare not be long away from the poor and suffering of my flock.'

'Then come at once, daddy; come now,' said the girl.

She took Mr King's hand and led him forward to where Mrs Fennimore was entertaining some of her principal guests.

'Mrs Fennimore,' said Faith, colouring crimson and looking quite beautiful as she did so, 'father has come here quite unexpectedly. May I introduce him to you?'

'I am delighted to see you and to make your acquaintance, Mr King,' replied Mrs Fennimore. 'You come at an auspicious moment, my dear sir, when your young daughter has made a very palpable hit with her genius for drama. Faith could do great things on the stage.'

'And truly, my dear madam, I trust that the day will never come when a daughter of mine will do great things on the stage,' was Mr King's answer. 'It is the very last profession I should desire for my child, nor is it in the least necessary. Not that I object to Shakespeare readings or to the very simple

form of acting which took place to-night; but an actor or actress in the ordinary sense of the word is an abomination to me, my good madam. I have, however, come here to see you on a matter of great importance. Can you spare me an hour of your valuable time now?'

'I very much regret it,' replied Mrs Fennimore; 'I would do so with pleasure if it were possible, but during the whole of this evening I have to devote myself to my guests. I can put you up for the night, Mr King; I always have a spare room in this house at the disposal of any of the parents of my pupils, and I can have a chat with you at any hour you like in the morning.'

Mr King frowned. 'That would be very inconvenient to me,' he said.

'I am sorry,' said Mrs Fennimore; 'but I cannot neglect my guests at the present moment.'

'At what hour, madam, may I have an interview with you in the morning?'

'At any hour that will suit you, sir.'

Mr King took a time-table from his pocket. 'There is a train,' he said, 'which leaves here for London at eight o'clock. Would it be possible for us to meet at seven, so that we might have a little talk together before I go back to the heavy duties which are mine as Rector of St Peter's?'

Mrs Fennimore had to confess to herself that seven was a remarkably early hour to have to attend to what she felt inclined to consider the whims of a somewhat eccentric man; but she was the kind of woman who always puts self out of sight.

'Very well,' she said; 'I will meet you in the breakfast-room at seven o'clock to-morrow morning.—And now, Faith, my dear, you would like to talk to your father?'

'Oh very, very much!' said Faith.

Mrs Fennimore turned aside to give some directions

to a servant with regard to the room where Mr King was to sleep, and Faith and her father left the great hall and went into a little anteroom on the same floor.

'So this is what you consider a very fine school, Faith?'

'It's a very nice school, father. I never thought about its being fine.'

'You look quite well, my dear. I was told you were ill—quite knocked up, in fact.'

'Yes, I was for a little; but I am well now—and—and happy.'

'I am glad to hear it, although it rather puzzles me to know how you can possibly be happy under the circumstances.'

'Why, daddy,' said Faith in a startled voice, 'what do you mean?'

'Mrs Fennimore will know in the morning what I mean, Faith. Just at present I am not inclined to discuss the matter with any one. Only, please, point out to me three of your schoolfellows.'

'Three of my schoolfellows?' said Faith.

'Yes, they are all standing in a bunch in the hall, and we can stand in this doorway and look at them. I want to see a girl who goes by the name of Diana Ludlow.'

'Daddy! Diana! Why, she is my first cousin; she is Aunt Margaret's daughter!'

'Nevertheless, my dear child, I presume she is a girl, and I should like to see her.'

'There she is,' said Faith. 'She was not acting to-night; and I am sorry for her, for she can act splendidly when she likes. Do you notice that tall, fair, very handsome girl — she is talking at the present moment to another girl of the name of Parr?'

'My dear, I don't care in the least whom she is talking to. So that fair girl is Diana? H'm—h'm! I have often heard it remarked that that particular

cast of features goes with—— Well, I must not prejudice your young mind, Faith.'

'But don't you admire her immensely, father?'

'Can't say I do. However, I sha'n't forget her in a hurry. That is Diana. I have no doubt I may have something to say to her by-and-by. Now, there's another girl I wish to look at for the purpose of identification presently.'

'And who can that be, dad? I never saw you in such a funny mood before.'

'Her name is Sophy Ross. Who is she? And where is she?'

'I don't exactly know *who* she is,' replied Faith, 'except that she spent some time at Haredale; but *where* she is is simple enough, for she is staring at us with all her might and main—that small girl with a freckled face and greeny eyes.'

'I know the sort,' said Mr King. 'Thank you; I shall not forget *her* in a hurry. And now there is one more—Kathleen, I think they call her—Kathleen MacMahon. I rather admired her, though I don't know that I had any reason to; but it was she who cajoled me into allowing you to come here. Where is Kathleen, Faith?'

'Darling Kathleen!' said Faith. 'There isn't her like in the school! I suppose she has run away to change her dress. She was Shylock, you know. Oh, she is so clever, and so beautiful, and so charming! There she is back again! That's her—the girl in the Liberty green velvet! Isn't she just—*too* lovely?'

'She has an open, honourable sort of face,' said Mr King. 'I infinitely prefer it to the statuesque beauty of Miss Diana; whereas, of course, the person who calls herself Sophy Ross is quite out of the running.'

'Oh daddy, I think they all mean well—I really do!'

'Sit down near me now, Faith, and I will talk

to you about your friends and relations at home. You must have dozens of questions to ask me about the old Rectory—how Martin is, and how Jane is. Well, I will reply immediately, and put my reply into a nutshell if I can. Martin is precisely as she always was, and so, for that matter, is Jane. I am sorry to tell you Miss Chance has lost her post as governess to those children whom she went to instruct when you left home. But I employ her now as a sort of district visitor, and pay her so much a week out of the church funds—not a great deal, but enough. She loves her work, and, all things considered, does not do it at all badly. She comes to me every morning, and I dictate several letters to her. I can't say a great deal for her spelling, which is by no means perfect; but I have provided her with a good English dictionary, and she is improving.'

'And you, daddy darling—how are you?'

'I don't know, Faith; I haven't the least idea how I am. I have no time to think about it. I am very busy from the earliest hours of the morning to the latest hours of night. I am often so busy that when I lay my head on my pillow I cannot sleep.'

'Then, daddy, you are overworking, and you want me to be at home to help you.'

'Nothing of the kind, my love. On the contrary, the home-life is simpler with fewer people about; and now that you are not there, Faith, I manage to read during my meals, which does me a vast lot more good than listening to the immature utterances of a very young girl.'

'Oh daddy, you don't mean to talk like that!' said Faith, nestling up to him.

'Yes, I do, my child; I do. You know I am one who never flatters, and nothing will induce me to begin a system of flattery. You are immature. In a few years' time you will, doubtless, have much

improved; but at the present your conversation is—to put it frankly, my dear Faith—not worth listening to.'

'I thought you would miss me a little!' said Faith; and tears filled her eyes.

'I don't miss you at all. But I tell you what: I mean to have justice done, and I mean you to be exceedingly useful to me in the future. I have come down here on purpose to have justice done to you, Faith.'

'Father! father! What can you mean?'

'I mean this: I have seen the lady who was once your friend—one of the most gracious and beautiful old women of her day, Mrs Mortimer of Court Abbey.'

'Oh father! have you seen *her?*'

'Yes, and I have come here on her business. Not another word, Faith; you won't get anything whatever out of me. I am very tired and should like to go to bed. I have made an arrangement to see Mrs Fennimore the first thing in the morning. I shall probably say good-bye to you at about a quarter to eight; so be ready at that hour, my dear child. It might be a wise plan, too, if Diana Ludlow and Sophy Ross and Kathleen MacMahon were also ready at that hour in case it is necessary to summon them.'

Faith had a curious sensation of fear creeping round her heart; but she knew, by past experience, that it was quite useless to try to get anything out of her father that he did not wish to say. She conducted him to his room, bade him good-night, and went to her own room.

There she sat down and tried to think. Her head ached. Some of the old nervousness which had assailed her so painfully at Haredale was coming back. Her father—*her* father—had seen old Mrs Mortimer! In consequence of that visit he meant to have a private interview with Mrs Fennimore in the morning. What did he want to say to her?

The whole thing was too dreadful! Was all the old misery to be raked up again? Faith felt she could scarcely contain herself.

When Kathleen came to bed presently she found Faith, still in her becoming Portia dress, seated by the table.

'Dear me!' she exclaimed. 'A Daniel come to judgment! My dear Faith, what is the matter now?'

'I don't know,' said Faith. 'I suppose I ought not to say; only I—I am a little bit nervous.'

'You ought to go straight to bed: you are just upset from seeing that dear, kind, nice, fusty old father of yours. What a mercy it was you didn't see him when you were acting, Faith! But I took care of that.'

'Kathleen,' said Faith, 'father is going to see Mrs Fennimore in the morning at seven, and he won't tell me what he is going to see her about. But he wants me to be ready to see him, if necessary, at a quarter to eight; and you also to be ready, Kathy, and Diana, and Sophy Ross. What can it mean? What *can* it mean?'

CHAPTER XXV.

A CALL TO CONSCIENCE.

MR KING slept soundly. He was the kind of man who never wasted a moment of time. He did his thinking when he was up, and never indulged in it when he lay—as he expressed it—between the sheets. It was a matter of habit with him to wake at the same hour morning after morning. That hour was six o'clock. He awakened now at six o'clock, struck a match, took out his watch, looked at the time, and rose at once. In consequence he was completely dressed, had read his morning papers, refreshed his mind with a perusal of the psalms of the day, and packed the very few things he had brought with him in his little Gladstone bag by seven o'clock.

Sharp at seven he went downstairs, where Mrs Fennimore, just as punctual and exact in her own way, was waiting for him. She was prepared to give the eccentric old clergyman a good breakfast. She spoke to him cheerfully, and invited him to partake of hot coffee and nicely prepared bacon and eggs. Mr King had not the slightest idea of refusing a good meal. He ate rapidly, scarcely talking as he did so, and looking at his watch from time to time. Suddenly he started to his feet.

'You will forgive me, Mrs Fennimore,' he said; 'but I have come here on purpose to have a talk with you, for I require your assistance with regard to a very important matter.'

Mrs Fennimore raised her brows; then said gently, 'An important matter that I can help you in?'

'Yes; and I think I am justified in demanding

your help, seeing that my dear daughter Faith, my only child, is an inmate of your school.'

'Oh, you want to speak about Faith?' said Mrs Fennimore, her face clearing. 'I may as well tell you at once, Mr King, that we like Faith immensely. I have seldom taken so warmly to any girl in such a short time. She is kind and affectionate, and, I think, has a very noble nature.'

'As to her being affectionate, I have often warned her against undue affection,' remarked the Rector; 'but as to her having a noble nature, she certainly ought to have one, seeing that she had quite the best mother in all the world.'

'Ah, my dear sir, and what a possession that is to any girl!'

'It is, Mrs Fennimore; it is. Now, I wish to ask you—for the time is exceedingly short—if you are aware of the special circumstances under which my daughter Faith came to this school?'

Mrs Fennimore looked puzzled. 'I really don't know of any special circumstances,' she said. 'I only know that Lady Ludlow came to see me in company with one of our best girls here, Kathleen MacMahon, and begged of me to take your daughter as one of my pupils, further suggesting that her own girl, Diana, should come to the school at the same time. She said something about Faith not being very well or very happy at Haredale, but accounted for it, Mr King, by the fact that the poor child had so lately lost her mother. I arranged to receive both girls, and they are here.'

'And that is all you have to tell me?' said Mr King.

'Is there anything more to know?' asked Mrs Fennimore.

'Yes, madam; certainly there is a great deal more to know.'

'Then perhaps you will forgive me, but ought not

I to receive that information from Lady Ludlow? She kept it from me—I suppose she had a reason for doing so; but having kept it to herself, ought I not to ask her to enlighten me?'

'No, madam, for I am Faith's father. I am therefore the right person to throw light on the real reason why my little girl has come to your school.'

'Well, sir, of course if you feel like that I haven't a word to say.'

'Will you listen to me, Mrs Fennimore, very attentively while I explain to you what has occurred?'

'Yes, sir, I will try to do so.'

'Have you ever happened to hear of an old lady of the name of Mortimer, who lives in another part of Yorkshire, not a very great way off from the Ludlows? Her place is called Court Abbey.'

'I have certainly heard of Mrs Mortimer,' said Mrs Fennimore, her face flushing with pleasure. 'She is, of course, a great deal older than I am; but I have known her since I was a little girl, and she has been instrumental in getting me some of my very nicest girls as boarders in this school.'

'Well, now, I wish to tell you a story about her.'

The Rector of St Peter's then proceeded to relate precisely what Mrs Mortimer had told him with regard to Faith—precisely what Faith had done on the last night of the old year. He told his story well—not exaggerating a single part, but making the whole strong and forcible.

Mrs Fennimore looked terribly shocked. 'And this was kept back from me?' she said.

'It was kept back from you. It was, in short, on account of this that Faith was sent here. Of course the girls who were at Haredale at the time must know all about it, and I should like to draw your attention in particular to the following names: Kathleen MacMahon, Diana Ludlow, and Sophy Ross. I should like further to say that I am positively and

absolutely convinced that my child Faith no more did what she has been accused of than I did.'

'But, sir, seeing is believing.'

'Oh,' said Mr King, 'I don't pretend for a moment that she did not take the part. But she is a remarkably innocent child; she knows nothing whatever of the world. She dearly loved—and, I believe, still dearly loves—Mrs Mortimer. Somebody put her up to this; and I want you, my dear madam, to find out who that person was, why it was done, what the motive was, and all about it. I am firmly resolved not to allow my child to remain in this school or return to the Ludlows with a cloud over her. She is absolutely innocent; but some one else is guilty. You are a woman of penetration. I am quite convinced that the guilty person is either Diana Ludlow or that unpleasant-looking little girl called Sophy Ross. I do not think Kathleen MacMahon can have had much to do with it, but of course she may have. Now, I leave the matter in your hands. My child is innocent—quite innocent; but the thing has got to be proved. She shall not hurt her kindest and best friend and go through life with such an aspersion on her character if I can prevent it.'

Mrs Fennimore did not speak for a minute. 'Does Faith know,' she said then, 'that you have come about —about this?'

'I think she guesses it; but I have not told her anything.'

'When must you catch your train, Mr King?'

'My train leaves at eight o'clock precisely.'

'Then I will order a cab for you. In the meantime we have still quite a quarter of an hour before you need go to the station.'

'Yes, we have just that time,' said Mr King. 'I must not miss my train; you understand that, don't you?'

'Yes, Mr King, of course I do.'

'Thinking that you might possibly have something to say, and believing you to be a woman of parts—as I used to call my own dear wife—I have requested the young people whom I mentioned to be in readiness to see us both before I left to-day. I want to tell them the story of Faith in Faith's own presence, and with you close by to watch their faces. I have not been a minister of God, listening to the sorrowful stories of many unhappy people for long years, without having acquired much penetration of character. Will you, therefore, summon the young ladies?'

'Certainly, Mr King.'

Mrs Fennimore rang the bell. Mr King's cab was ordered, and at the same time Faith, Kathleen, Diana, and Sophy were requested to come immediately to the breakfast-room. No girl at Kendal House dared, even for a moment, disobey Mrs Fennimore's orders. No girl would consider her place worth anything in the school who did so, and the four appeared almost as soon as they were summoned.

Faith ran up at once to her father, put her arms round his neck, and kissed him affectionately; while the other three stood silent, a little puzzled, and, truth to tell, with a queer sensation of uneasiness within their breasts.

'Stand aside now, Faith,' said her father. 'I have hardly a minute to spare. I have been talking with Mrs Fennimore about what occurred at Haredale on the last night of the year.'

'Oh father!' said poor Faith. She covered her face for a minute. Then she turned very white.

'I have heard the whole story, my dear girl, from no less a person than Mrs Mortimer herself.'

'Mrs Mortimer?' gasped Diana.

'Yes, Diana Ludlow—Mrs Mortimer.—And I wish to say now that having known you, Faith, since you were a baby, I don't believe for a single moment that you did what you did except at the cruel instigation

Faith ran up at once to her father, while the other three stood silent.
P. E. PAGE 272.

of another. That other must have been one of the three girls who are now present: that other must have been either you, Kathleen MacMahon; or you, Diana Ludlow; or you, Sophy Ross. And I give you three clearly to understand that I don't mean to leave one stone unturned until I find out which of you is the guilty party. For that purpose I have made an arrangement which I think Mrs Fennimore will allow me to carry out. It is this: that I come here on Monday next and take you all four to see Mrs Mortimer at Court Abbey. If Mrs Fennimore will join us I shall be only too pleased. Anyhow, you have got to deny, in that old lady's presence, having had anything whatever to do with this matter. And I think, my dear girls, you will clearly understand what a very frightful untruth such an untruth would be; for Mrs Mortimer is one of the best women that ever lived, and this dear little girl is also one of the best girls I have ever come across. Now, I won't keep you any longer. Whichever of you is guilty can confess her fault between now and next Monday, or you can accompany me all the way to Yorkshire on that day. I will leave the matter to God and your own consciences. I don't want to be unkind; but my child is innocent, and her innocence has got to be proved.—Mrs Fennimore, you uphold me in this matter?'

'I uphold you, sir, and I respect you,' said the head-mistress. She sank back in her chair, and as she did so held out her hand to Faith.

Faith dropped on her knees by Mrs Fennimore's side and burst into tears. Suddenly she got up.

'Father—darling father!' she said, 'let it alone—do let it alone! You say I am innocent, and Mrs Fennimore knows I am innocent, and I don't mind a bit about the rest of the world. Let us forget it now, darling father; that is what I'd like best.'

'It's splendid of you to talk like that, Faith!'

exclaimed Kathleen; 'but I don't a bit agree with you. I don't think the matter ought to be let alone. I think it ought to be sifted to the very bottom—yes, to the very, very bottom.'

'And I agree with Kathleen,' said Mr King. 'Ah, there's the sound of my cab-wheels! I must go. Expect me here Monday week. Good-bye, Faith; keep up your courage.—Girls, remember that God knows the truth, and He won't allow a child who is practically an orphan child—or, at least, a motherless child—to be treated unfairly.'

The Rector left the room. The three girls who were more or less accused of having put Faith up to what she had done stared at each other.

Mrs Fennimore rose briskly. 'This is a very unpleasant business,' she said. 'But it is breakfast-time now, and the usual work of the day must begin. Go to your lessons, my dears. If any of you has anything special to say to me, I shall be alone in my room at five o'clock this afternoon.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CLOUDS GROW DARKER.

MR KING'S advent had acted like a bombshell in the midst of the hitherto happy and peaceful school. Diana and Sophy did not dare even to speak to each other. Kathleen held her pretty head very high, and seemed, truth to tell, remarkably cheerful. Neither did she speak to Diana or Sophy.

In the course of the day Diana felt something drop softly into her lap. She was in the girls' private sitting-room, and, glancing back, she saw Harriet Parr leave the room. The something that fell into her lap was a tiny note, folded up in three-cornered fashion. She opened it and read the following words:

'Destroy this at once. No one can force us to speak. I shall be silent if you will.'

As soon as ever Diana had read these few words, which were signed with the initials 'S. R.,' she got up, and, going across the room, dropped the note into the heart of a blazing fire.

As she did so, Veronica Dacre came in. 'What were you burning?' she asked.

'Oh, a tiresome note that one of the girls just wrote to me,' replied Diana.

'I hate getting notes from other girls,' said Veronica. 'I think it's an odious custom in any school, and I know Mrs Fennimore doesn't approve of it. They began it with me when I first came; but I put it down with a pretty firm hand, taking good care not

on any one occasion to take the slightest notice of such letters. If I were you, Diana, I should do the same.'

'Yes; perhaps you are right,' said Diana, who, since the terrible fright she had sustained that morning, felt it almost impossible to maintain her usual stately bearing. If everything were found out—if when she, and Sophy, and Kathleen, and Faith were taken to Court Abbey, the truth were wrung out of them by a sort of mesmerism—she felt quite certain that she would never know a happy moment again. Oh, how mad, how *mad* she had been! Just because she had been a little jealous, to think of putting herself into the power of such a horrible girl as Sophy Ross! How wretched her life had been from the moment her supposed wishes had been accomplished! She herself had been sent to school. There Sophy had tortured her, and she had only got out of that scrape by inviting a girl like Harriet Parr to spend Easter at Haredale. Harriet, of course, was going; and Sophy had paid her horrid, odious dressmaker's bill.

But now much, much worse had occurred; for Diana knew well, from one glance at his face, that her Uncle Leonard was not the sort of man to be easily put off when he was determined to investigate a matter. He was firmly resolved to investigate this matter; and he would do it—yes, beyond doubt he would do it! And how was it possible for either Diana or Sophy to escape?

Just then Kathleen entered the room. She looked quickly round her. Then she went up to Diana.

'If you tell, I'll tell,' she said. 'Of course I am to blame too; I put you up to employing Sophy Ross. I am not altogether innocent, although of course nothing would have induced me to do what you did. But now that Mr King and Mrs Fennimore have taken the matter in hand, I don't see how you can

keep it hidden. It would be far more dignified for you, Diana, *just to tell.*'

'But that is just what I can't possibly do,' said Diana; 'and you dare not tell—you dare not, Kathleen—unless I give you leave.'

'That is just what I feel,' replied Kathleen. 'I am the least to blame, so I ought to be the last to tell. Sophy is the one who ought to tell. Oh Diana, if you would only help me—if you would only help me to work on her feelings—to get her to confess everything! How can we possibly face dear Mrs Mortimer after all that has occurred? And I can tell you that Mr King is no mean character; and what he determines to do he *will* do, whatever we may say to the contrary.'

'I can't tell, whatever happens; I can't—I can't!' said Diana.

'Well, don't look so pale and miserable,' said Kathleen; 'for really, to watch your face, Di, any one would suspect you.'

'What do you mean?' said Diana in a frightened voice. 'Who is suspecting me?'

'Well, of course, there's Mrs Fennimore; beyond doubt she suspects us all three. But there's that plain, good-natured little girl Harriet Parr. She is really quite a nice child, although there's nothing attractive about her; and she came to me just now and asked me what was the matter with you.'

'Did she say anything more?' asked Diana.

'Only that Sophy had given her a note to put into your hand, and that you seemed so startled when you received it. Then, of course, Veronica came into the room and caught you burning it, and she spoke of it to Harriet and me. It doesn't much matter what you do in my presence, for I know what you know; although I believe that at the present moment no one really knows the entire truth of this most horrid, dreadful, unpleasant business except Sophy herself.'

'Sophy is the one who knows; and Sophy has made up her mind, come what will, not to tell, and so have I,' said Diana. 'We 'll get out of it somehow. Faith is quite happy. She will have to do without the friendship of old Mrs Mortimer; and, beyond that, nothing whatever will happen to her. We 'll all be quite kind to her. I don't dislike her a bit now. I used to, of course. I hated her when first she came to us; but such awful things have occurred, and I find myself in such a hole, that I almost wish I were Faith and Faith were me at the present moment.'

'Dear, dear!' said Kathleen. 'Of course you did frightfully wrong, Di; and when the moment comes for making full confession I 'll have to tell about your letter to me.'

'You won't!' said Diana.

'Certainly I will. I 'll have to tell about your letter, and about my reply, and how I put you up to getting Sophy to do your dirty work. But then, of course, as I said already, I don't wish to be the first one to confess; that ought to be Sophy's business, and you and I ought to make her do it—we just ought, whether we like it or whether we don't.'

'No, no, no!' said Diana. 'No—I will risk it. I will never, never tell!'

CHAPTER XXVII.

PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY.

MEANWHILE Mrs Mortimer, in her beautiful home, was feeling a curious sense of relief. Since Mr King's visit the great soreness of her heart against poor little Faith had considerably abated. She began to see that the Rector, at least, did not believe in Faith's guilt; and although that most tiresome old proverb that 'seeing is believing' came back to her mind again and yet again, she certainly felt much less sore against Faith than she had done on that terrible evening when the child had taken-off the old lady and she had felt herself publicly insulted.

On the following Saturday Mrs Mortimer received a letter from Lady Ludlow. This letter amazed her a great deal.

'MY OLD FRIEND'—she wrote—'Something very much out of the common is about to occur. You know, of course, all about my darling sister's husband, Leonard King? Well, he came down here to see us yesterday, and has, in fact, only just left. He would not say at the time exactly what his business was, but he gave Charles and me hints which astonished us very much. He told us, for instance, that he had been to see you—you, dear, whom he had never seen before in his life! We felt that Leonard had taken almost a liberty.'

'But, indeed, he did nothing of the sort!' ejaculated Mrs Mortimer half-aloud as she came to this portion of her letter. 'I like the Reverend Leonard King,

and I do not see why Margaret and Charles should be so very uppish because Margaret's dear sister chose to marry him. He is a very upright, honourable kind of man, and it gave me considerable comfort to have that chat with him. But—dear, dear, what a lot Margaret seems to have to say! As a rule she isn't a good letter-writer.'

Mrs Mortimer took up the closely written pages and continued to peruse her letter.

'We certainly were astonished, my dear, dear friend, at Leonard's troubling you. But our astonishment was nothing at all to what he said next. He said that you and he had a very plain talk together, but that circumstances obliged him to keep the subject of that talk to himself until next Monday, when he particularly wishes that Charles and I should visit you at Court Abbey. He did not give any reason for expressing this wish; he urged us both in the most forcible language to come. Now, it 's all very well for Leonard to take that tone with his parishioners; but he certainly has not the slightest control over either Charles or me, and poor Faith's behaviour has not been of such a nature as to make us overanxious to oblige him. You know to what I allude, my most dearly loved friend; and I may as well say now, frankly, that Charles and I feel that we can never be quite the same again after what has happened at Haredale. Of course poor Leonard knows nothing of this; nor would I tell him, for there would be no use in disturbing the poor man needlessly, and there is no doubt he misses his beloved wife exceedingly.

'Well, now—to come to the point. Charles and I would make no promise with regard to going to Court Abbey unless we had an invitation from yourself. It was Charles who thought of this, and he has just said to me, "Ask her to wire; and if she wishes us to

come, say we will come. If not, we certainly won't stir were a hundred Leonard Kings to try to force us in the matter." So, dear Mrs Mortimer, send me a wire if you want us; and, of course, we will both take an early train and be with you about noon.—Ever your most affectionate friend,

'MARGARET LUDLOW.'

'That man has got grit in him,' thought Mrs Mortimer to herself. She rose and rang her bell.

In a minute Bowden appeared.

'Bowden, I want George to saddle one of the horses and ride into Templeton in order to send a telegram for me. Tell him to be very quick about it, for I want the message to go at once.'

'Yes, ma'am,' replied Bowden in her most respectful voice. 'You want a wire sent?'

'A telegram, please, Bowden. I dislike the word "wire;" it is not refined.'

Bowden went away to give the orders, and Mrs Mortimer filled in a telegraph-form:

'I know why Leonard King is coming here on Monday, and I shall be only too pleased if you and Charles will also be present. Please arrive in time for lunch.—MARY MORTIMER.'

This telegram was received with unbounded astonishment by the Ludlows.

'What can it possibly mean?' said Sir Charles. 'What can that tiresome man, Leonard King, have been saying to our dear old kinswoman?'

'It strikes me, Charles,' said Lady Ludlow, 'that we must go to Court Abbey without fail in order to protect her.'

'Certainly, my love, we will do so,' was the response.

Jacqueline was rather astonished when her mother

told her on Sunday evening that she and her father were going to Court Abbey on the following day.

'Won't you take me too?' asked the child.

'No, dear; you have not been invited, and you know that dear Mrs Mortimer is most particular with regard to what she considers the laws of etiquette. Ah, Jacqueline! a character like hers—how frightfully she was hurt on the day when Faith caricatured her!'

'I have always told you, mums,' replied Jacqueline, 'that I believe in Faith, and that I don't think she was really to blame for what happened. Anyhow, I am glad you are going; for you will be able to tell me how our darling Mrs Mortimer is, and whether she really received such a severe shock as we feared she had done.'

'It 's my impression,' said Lady Ludlow, 'that she is quite well and like herself again. However, as you say, Jacky, we shall be able to tell you everything on our return. You must, my dear child, work hard during our absence. I often think that you must miss your dear sister Diana terribly.'

'Indeed I do,' replied Jacqueline. 'And also darling Faith,' she added.

Lady Ludlow was silent when Jacqueline spoke about Faith, and by-and-by the girl went away to her own room. It happened that Miss Price had gone to visit some friends for the week-end. Perhaps, had she been at home, Jacqueline might have confided in her; but as it was, she had no one to talk matters over with, and was in consequence feeling full of anxiety. For in the course of the week she had received a letter from Diana so full of hidden distress and undefined misery that her sister's affectionate heart was quite wrung with pain for her. Diana had told nothing, and yet in one sense she had told everything; for hints often speak louder than mere words, and she had certainly made one remark which filled Jacqueline's

heart with the vaguest sense of discomfort and alarm. She had mentioned the fact that Mr King had been to the school; that during his visit there he had made himself most unpleasant; and that the queerest thing of all was about to happen, for Mrs Fennimore, at Mr King's request, was making up a party to go to Court Abbey on Monday in order to visit Mrs Mortimer. From Eastbourne to Yorkshire was so very long a journey that the idea of taking a party of girls would have been sufficiently startling without the additional fact that Diana was going. Faith, who was supposed to have behaved so very badly, was also going; and now Jacqueline's own father and mother were requested to be present. What could it mean? What *did* it mean?

Jacqueline, being by nature quite incapable of doing the kind of things which disturbed Diana so dreadfully and had got her into such a frightful scrape, could find no clue to the mystery. But she was firmly convinced that there was a mystery, and that it had something to do with Diana's frantic request for the loan of thirty pounds. That loan had not been supplied, and Diana had written quite cheerfully to say that it did not matter at all; but the fact still remained that Diana was now again as miserable as girl could be.

Meanwhile, at school things were anything but cheerful. Sophy had firmly made up her mind that nothing would induce her to tell, and she knew enough of her accomplices—as she was pleased to call Diana and Kathleen—to be certain that they would not take the lead in the matter. She herself was the principal offender, and if she chose to hide her transgressions they would be forced to keep silence.

Sophy said to herself, 'All the rest of them are in a blue funk because of that precious Mr King; but I am not going to be alarmed about him. I shall just enjoy my jaunt, or rather pretend to enjoy it;

not a thing shall be got out of me. A nice fool that good old parson will feel when a lot of girls appear before Mrs Mortimer on Monday next and have nothing at all to say! I know quite well what *I* mean to do.'

For Sophy had made up her mind. Things had become impossible. Her great scheme had turned out a failure. She must give up all thought of Diana being her friend in the future. She must no longer think of Haredale as a delightful residence for the holidays. She must make some excuse, and, yes, run away! Where was Sophy to go? She was without money. It is all very fine to talk of doing this, that, and the other if your purse is full; but if the said purse is empty, then matters assume a very different complexion.

But Sophy had a friend who was at present on excellent terms with her, and that girl was Harriet Parr. Harriet was delighted with Diana, and Diana was really—that is, for her—almost kind to Harriet. Sophy said to herself, 'But for me Harrie would never have known Di Ludlow, and would never have had the luck to be invited to Haredale. If I could only borrow a few pounds from her I could slip away on Monday morning and not appear at all at Court Abbey.'

Sophy was accustomed to manage things, as she considered, very well; and on that very Saturday when Mrs Mortimer received her strange letter from the Ludlows she, Sophy, was struggling to get out of a corner so tight that she could scarcely breathe in it.

The girls were allowed to do pretty much what they liked on Saturdays. The expedition of Monday was carefully kept from the knowledge of the rest of the school. Mrs Fennimore was to meet Mr King in London; and they were to go straight down from King's Cross to York, Mrs Mortimer's place not being many miles distant from the beautiful old cathedral

city. All that was to be told at the school was that Mrs Fennimore and some of the girls had gone away for the night, and even this information was not to be broken to them until Monday morning.

They were to start very early indeed on Monday; they were, in short, to leave Eastbourne at seven o'clock in the morning. All this would have been trifling and wonderfully exciting but for that dark sin which lay at the back of it, but for that shadow of a cloud which oppressed each young heart and made one and all more or less afraid. Even Faith dreaded the expedition, and was unable at that moment to show due gratitude to her father for what he was trying to do for her.

Saturday afternoon was always a time for recreation and amusement, and when Sophy went to Harriet and begged to be allowed to go for a walk with her, Harriet at once acceded to her request. They started off together.

There were certain parts of Eastbourne where they were allowed to go unattended, for Mrs Fennimore had not the slightest idea of bringing up the girls to be milksops—to be, in short, afraid of their own shadows. She wished to teach them independence of character from the very first. Harriet and Sophy were therefore able to visit the shops; then to walk along the parade; then to go down near the seashore, where they could sit and talk in one of the many shelters.

By-and-by Sophy looked suddenly at her watch. 'Dear, dear!' she said, 'it's nearly time for tea, and I never went to Marshall's to buy that list of things which mother wants me to send to her.'

Marshall's was a draper's shop in one of the most fashionable streets of the town.

'What list of things?' asked Harriet.

'I've got the list in my pocket, and it really isn't so very interesting; but they're the kind of things you

can't get in Manchester, strange as it may seem. Mother sent me a five-pound cheque to buy the things she wants for my eldest brother's birthday. They're going to have quite a *fête* at home on that day, though I am sure I don't understand why when we are all so very poor. I am afraid I must leave you now, Harrie, and rush off to get the things. Oh, don't offer to come with me, for I shall do my commission much faster if I am alone.'

'Very well,' said Harriet.

Sophy put her hand in her pocket.

'There—how provoking!' she said. 'I have not brought out my purse. Harrie, I suppose you couldn't be an angel and lend me five pounds until I get back to the house again?'

'Of course I could, easily,' replied the unsuspicious Harriet. 'I got a present from Aunt Prudence to-day, and I cashed it when I was out this morning. It was a cheque for ten pounds. I happen to have the money in my pocket, and can let you have five sovereigns with pleasure.'

'Thank you ever so much!' replied Sophy. 'It's only for a very short time, for when I get back again I can let you have mother's cheque.'

'Oh, that doesn't matter at all,' replied Harriet; 'you can pay me whenever it is convenient.'

'I will pay you as soon as ever I get back,' replied Sophy the dishonest, 'for I hate being in debt.'

Harriet made no response. She had never found out anything wrong in Sophy, and lent her five sovereigns without a moment's hesitation. The next minute the girls had parted company. Harriet had gone quickly back to the house, and Sophy had started in the direction of the shops. Not that she had the slightest idea of going to any of them—not she; but she must stay out for the sake of appearances for a short time, in order completely to blind Harriet's eyes. When she reached the house she was a little

late for tea. There was a place for her, however, close to Harriet, and she sank into it.

'Well, did you get your things?' asked Harriet.

'Oh yes; and I am ever so much obliged to you. I had them sent straight off to mother to Manchester in order to save delay. But—oh Harrie! what do you think? I can't find that cheque anywhere that mother sent me. Do you know, I'm awfully afraid that I tore up the letter! I know I was tearing up a lot of letters in my room this morning; and it has just flashed across me that I took out the list of what mother wanted and left the cheque inside the envelope, which I tore up without once thinking about it. Dear, dear, dear! What is to be done? Of course, if the cheque's torn up I have only to write to mother for another, for no one can cash a torn-up cheque. But can you wait for your money for a day or two, dear Harrie?'

'Wait for it? Of course I can, Sophy. If you can't find the cheque, never mind. It will do quite well if you pay me back at the end of a week; only,' she added, 'you ought to write at once to your mother in order, should the cheque have been picked up (which is just possible), that the payment may be stopped at the bank.'

'You *are* good-natured, Harrie. Yes, I will do exactly what you say,' replied Sophy.

And now she felt quite comfortable, having made her plans.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHECKED, AND CONFESSION.

MONDAY morning dawned. It dawned with a murky sky and a threatening of heavy rain. The girls were called while it was still dark. They got up hastily, ate their breakfast, and were driving to the station before daylight appeared.

Meanwhile Kathleen was watching Sophy, but without appearing to do so; for if Sophy was clever, Kathleen was just as clever in her own way. Sophy was clever for evil, Kathleen for good; and the cleverness for that which is good does, now and then, count for more in this old world than that which is for evil.

Sophy had made all her plans. She meant to slip away from the others when they got to King's Cross, taking a cab and driving to the house of a cousin of her mother's, who, she knew, would put her up for a few days. Kathleen, during the journey to London, did not apparently take the slightest notice of Sophy; but all the time, in her heart of hearts, she was thinking of Sophy, and of her alone. She was quite certain that Sophy was, as she expressed it, up to something, and she was equally resolved to nip that something in the bud. Sophy knew that it was now or never with her if her whole life was not to be openly disgraced; and Kathleen knew that it was now or never with her if dear Faith was to be cleared, and if the harmonious life which they all used to enjoy at Kendal House was to be resumed.

At King's Cross there was some little commotion, for the party was quite a large one, and Mrs Fennimore was anxiously looking out for Mr King. Mrs

Fennimore had just gone to the booking-office to take tickets; and Sophy was looking round her with a wild light in her eyes, which Kathleen was the only one to observe, and consequently the only one to interfere with. She laid her hand now on Sophy's thin arm and said in a low tone, 'Don't run away, Sophy; there 's no use in it.'

At these words Sophy felt herself turn almost sick and faint.

'I heard what passed between you and Harriet on Saturday night,' said Kathleen. 'You borrowed five pounds from Harriet, and pretended that you had lost a cheque which your mother sent you. You told Harrie that you had gone to Marshall's to buy a lot of things to send to your mother at Manchester. Harriet mentioned the circumstance to me in quite a casual way, and I listened to her in an equally casual way; and then, my dear Sophy—oh, don't tremble so much!—I, in my casual fashion, begged of Miss Thomson to come out with me. We walked as far as Marshall's, and I left dear Thomson pacing about in the street—she 's a dear, good old sort!—and I went in and made inquiries. My inquiries led to the discovery of the fact that you had not been to the shop at all, that you had not bought anything there on Saturday, and that you certainly had sent no parcel to your people in Manchester. Having got my information, I kept it to myself. Only, Sophy, we really don't want a girl like you much longer in the school; so you had best own up to-day what happened, and of course Di and I will take our share. Anyhow, my dear Sophy, you are not going away now, however many sovereigns of poor Harrie's you may happen to have in your pocket.'

'Oh, you are a horrid, horrid girl!' said Sophy; 'and I downright hate you.'

'That is very likely, dear,' replied Kathleen. 'But come, Mrs Fennimore is calling us.'

A first-class compartment was secured for the young travellers, the head-mistress, and for Mr King, and presently they were all on their way to York. It was quite impossible for Sophy to leave the train while it was going at express speed; and Kathleen was able to get Sophy off her mind for the present and devote herself more to the rest of her companions.

But the girls were all depressed, and even Kathleen had hard work to keep up their spirits. When they got to York a stately old carriage, drawn by a pair of thoroughbred bay horses, was waiting to receive them. Mrs Mortimer's servant was standing on the platform; and Mr King went straight up to him, discovered who he was, and bundled all the party as quickly as possible into the carriage.

The ten miles' drive did not take very long; and although Sophy's teeth were chattering with cold on account of her inward misery, she tried hard to keep her feelings to herself. She felt that she had at least one motive left in life, and that was to avenge herself on Kathleen.

By-and-by the party reached the massive iron gates of the avenue. Winding up and up for a couple of miles, this avenue would finally land the party outside the great portico of Court Abbey. Here Kathleen sprang to her feet.

'I am cold!' she said. 'I should love to walk up the avenue. Who will walk with me?—Oh, not you, Faith; I wouldn't disturb you, sitting so happy and close to your father.—Nor would I disturb you, Diana, for, my dear, you're a little bit of a lazybones.—No; my chosen companion is Sophy Ross.—Come along, Sophy! You look quite blue with cold. Out you get! Now, then, let's walk slowly arm-in-arm until we get to the top of this steep hill.'

The carriage was stopped. The two girls alighted, and Mrs Mortimer's handsome conveyance bowled out of sight.

'Now, Sophy,' said Kathleen, 'I have given you a last chance. What do you mean to do?'

'Nothing,' said Sophy.

'Oh, you will do nothing?'

'I have said so. Of course you or Diana can peach on me, or whatever ugly word you like to call it, if you please; but I shall do nothing. If you had left me alone at King's Cross, and had allowed me to do what I meant to do—to go to my Aunt Susan and stay with her for a day or two—why then, of course, the matter would have been quite easy, for my absence would have explained itself. But you have forced me to be present, and if I am present I shall be silent. I am not one scrap afraid of that horrid Mr King, let me tell you.'

'I have something else I want to say; so that I need not trouble you with talk about Mr King, Sophy.'

'What is that?' said Sophy. 'Oh, I wish you wouldn't hold my arm so tight!' she added.

She looked wildly round her. Once again the idea of running away and escaping at any cost presented itself to her.

'I am holding you tightly, Sophy, because, if you mean to be silent, I also mean to do something else.'

'And what is that?'

'I mean, in short, to do two things.'

'What are they?'

'In the first place, I cannot make you speak against your will.'

Sophy laughed. 'I am glad you see that,' she said.

'But I can prevent your running away, and I mean to do it.'

'You have prevented my running away.'

'Yes, and I mean to go on preventing it until this little drama is carried through to the bitter end; and secondly, my dear, good Sophy, if you mean to be silent I intend to speak.'

At these words Sophy turned deadly pale. 'You intend to speak? You would be mean enough?'

'I don't intend to say anything of what occurred at Christmas, but I shall tell that little story about the cheque and the money you borrowed from Harriet Parr. I think people who will be present will be sufficiently sharp-witted to draw their own conclusions.'

'But why do you want to ruin me by telling such a story?'

'I wouldn't do it on my own account,' remarked Kathleen; 'but Harriet wishes it.'

'Harriet wishes it! What do you mean?'

'Yes. I had a talk with her last night; and she told me about a valuable trinket she had given you, and which she discovered in the strangest way you had not kept as a present from her, but had sold, for she saw it a fortnight or so later in one of the principal jeweller's windows. She felt very much hurt, as she thought you loved her, and imagined that you would care for the trinket for her sake. Then, after I had a little talk with her, she began to feel very uncertain about the cheque; and when I told her, as I thought it only right to tell her, that I had been to Marshall's, and had discovered that you had not bought anything there, nor sent anything from there to Manchester, Harriet was quite furious, and asked me to tell you that she must have the money back, and also begged of me to let Mrs Fennimore know. Now, I may as well tell Mrs Fennimore before the others as behind their backs; so I think you are in a pretty tight hole, Sophy Ross. And far and away your best plan would be to confess what you did about Faith, and allow Di and me to take our share of the blame; in which case, of course, I shall allow you and Harriet to fight out your own battles—that is, if you ever return to the school.'

'Oh, I never shall; and I should never have done

what I did but for you. It was you put it into Diana's head; it was — it was! Oh, I am so miserable!'

'You won't be half so miserable after you have told. And when I mentioned your name to Diana in that letter I really did it almost as a joke. Anyhow, we must hurry now, for the others are waiting. Come, Sophy; however bad you are, and however much the rest of my schoolfellows look down on you, I will stand your friend if you are plucky to-day.'

'Oh dear!' sighed Sophy.

'And if you are sorry,' continued Kathleen—'yes, sorry—that's the great thing.'

'I am so miserable that I am quite sure I must be sorry enough for anything.'

'Yes; but I want you to be sorry in the right way—sorry because you did something very, very wrong.'

Before that walk came to an end Sophy was clinging to Kathleen, holding her tightly by her arm, and trying to keep back the sobs which would rise into her throat.

Never was any girl, meanwhile, more amazed and more distressed than was Diana Ludlow when she caught sight of her father and mother waiting to welcome her in the old hall at Court Abbey. They spoke quite cheerfully to her, however, and, up to the present, had not the slightest idea that she had done anything wrong.

'Oh mother!' exclaimed the girl.—'Father darling, how are you?—Oh mother, what has brought you here to-day?'

'Mrs Mortimer has brought us both, Di; and now it seems that you are here, and Kathleen MacMahon, and Faith, and that little queer girl, Sophy Something-or-other—oh, Ross, I think—and Mr King, and Mrs Fennimore. What can it all mean? Have you the least idea what it means, Diana?'

'Yes, I have, mother,' said Diana in a choking voice.

'You have, my child? You don't look a bit well either. What is the matter?'

'Mother—perhaps you will never call me your child again after—after you know.'

'Oh Di, don't exaggerate! You always were such a calm, correct, blameless sort of girl. My dear, dear child — what can be wrong? See, dearest — your father and I have received this note from dear Mrs Mortimer.'

The rest of the party were scattered about the house in different directions, and Diana was alone with her parents. She took up Mrs Mortimer's little note and read its brief contents:

'My dear, dear Relatives, — You have come. Pray forgive an old woman if she refuses to see any one of your party with the exception of Mr King—dear Alice's husband—until lunch is over. Lunch will be served for you all in the dining-room, but I shall have mine in my private sitting-room. My great age permits this, dears, and I am sure you will not be annoyed. As to your brother-in-law Leonard, he happens to be a priest, and as such I respect and honour him, and look for some spiritual ministrations at his hands which will support me in a time of some anxiety which is to follow lunch. Now, my dears, keep up your courage. It is right sometimes to expose the ways of the wicked; it is right sometimes to be brave, and to fear God, not man.—Your loving old relative,

'Mary Mortimer.'

'What do you think of that, Diana?' said her mother.

'I know exactly what she means, mother. I know exactly what is going to happen, and so will you

very, very soon—the sooner the better as far as I am concerned.'

'Charles,' said his wife, 'this child—our precious Diana—says that she knows what Mrs Mortimer means.'

'Well, I don't,' said Sir Charles; 'but what I do know is this—that I am uncommonly hungry, and shall be very glad when lunch is ready.'

Perhaps Sir Charles Ludlow was the only member of that party who really felt much appetite for lunch. Mr King took his with Mrs Mortimer. Faith's cheeks were blazing with excitement and a mingling of terror and longing which possessed her at the thought of seeing the dearly loved face of her old friend once again. As to Diana, she felt cold, stiff, silent. There was a weight pressing on her heart. She did not think she could ever again be the gay and happy girl she was once. Oh, how terribly wrong had been her conduct, and how severe was her present punishment!

As to Sophy, all she did was to sit very close to Kathleen and now and then to clutch hold of her dress with one of her small hot hands, while now and again Kathleen bent towards her and whispered, 'Keep up your heart; it'll be all right afterwards, and I at least don't break my word.'

By-and-by the door of the great dining-room was opened and Mr King appeared. 'Our dear old friend would like to see you all,' he said. 'Will you follow me, therefore, to her room?'

'Really, Leonard does take a great deal on himself!' thought Lady Ludlow. She felt downright cross and inclined to show her temper to any one who spoke to her.

Sir Charles, however, having partaken of an excellent lunch, was in high good humour; and as they went upstairs, and along some wide corridors towards Mrs Mortimer's suite of rooms, he was

calculating in his own mind if it would be possible for him and his wife to get back to Haredale that night.

At last they reached the rooms that Mrs Mortimer occupied. They were conducted by Mr King through an anteroom into a very beautiful sitting-room, which the old lady used as her own. Mrs Mortimer, beautifully dressed in the richest black velvet, with a little real lace round her old neck and wrists and covering her head, was standing in an expectant attitude by one of the bay windows.

As soon as ever the party entered the room Mr King took Faith's hand and led her up to the old lady.

'Faith,' he said, 'our old friend is tired and cannot be unduly excited. Tell her, once and for all, that you, when you caricatured her on that night—the last night of last year—did so under the impression that you were pleasing her, that you were doing it at her express wish.'

A scornful laugh came from Lady Ludlow's lips, but Faith was too absorbed to hear it. She raised her beautiful, truthful eyes, fixed them full on the old lady, and said at once and very simply, 'It hurt me to do it, awfully; but I did think—I did—that it was your wish. I only did it because of that.'

'Shameful! Extraordinary!' said Sir Charles.

'Be silent for a moment or two, please, Charles Ludlow!' exclaimed Mr King.—'Mrs Mortimer, do you believe my child, or do you not?'

'I believe your child,' said Mrs Mortimer.

'Thank you,' was the answer.—'Faith, you can stand aside.—Now, some one—some one in this room prompted Faith to do what she did. Mrs Mortimer and I are certain on that point, and we want that some one to confess her guilt. If she confesses it God will forgive her, for we have His word and His

promise to that effect. Who prompted my daughter, Faith King, to do such an unworthy deed?'

'I did,' said Sophy Ross.

All eyes were now turned upon Sophy.

'Yes, I did it,' she said. 'There were others in the business too, but I was the worst. I did it because—because I wanted to have a hold over Diana Ludlow.'

Lady Ludlow's face became white. She fixed her agonised eyes on Diana.

'So I made up that scheme,' continued Sophy. 'I never meant to tell—never; but Kathleen here has forced my hand. I guessed that it would hurt a good deal, and Faith is such a baby that she believes things that no one else would give credence to for a moment. So I told her that Mrs Mortimer wished it, and I borrowed the clothes out of Mrs Mortimer's room, and I stole the signet-ring. Oh, well—Mrs Mortimer got it back again, so I suppose that is all right. I don't mean to screen myself. I was pretty bad, I'll allow that; but I wasn't the only one.'

'No, I think I was the worst,' said Diana; and then, to the amazement of her parents, she told the story of her feelings with regard to Faith since Faith had arrived at Haredale.

She described her letter to Kathleen MacMahon; and when she had reached that point Kathleen herself took up the thread of the discourse.

'That letter drove me mad,' she said, 'for of course I am not a bit that sort, and I never thought Diana was; I really was very fond of Diana until I got that letter. But I did a very wicked, crooked thing when I wrote back, for in telling her that I would not get Faith into a scrape I said that doubtless Sophy could do her dirty work. Yes, that is what I said; so, of course, I am to blame too. Perhaps I am to blame the worst of all, for I put the temptation right into Sophy's way. And Sophy is very poor. It's very difficult to be poor and to try to act as a lady; so I

think there ought to be plenty of allowance made for her, and perhaps she will never forget what she has suffered over this matter. For my part, I wish to say here that I have suffered immensely; and as to poor Diana, she has been nearly mad. But I think Sophy has suffered the worst of us all; so I, for one, mean to be her friend if she will have me.'

At this moment Kathleen crossed the room and slipped her hand into Sophy's arm.

'Bravo, Sophy!' she whispered; 'you did it right well when you set about it. And isn't your heart a good bit lighter?'

'Somehow it's like a feather,' answered Sophy.

To describe the amazement of Sir Charles and Lady Ludlow, to say what they really felt about Diana, to say how they talked to Diana; to record what Mrs Mortimer said to Faith; to explain Mrs Fennimore's feelings; and last, but not least, to hear the Reverend Leonard King say, 'He who confesses his wickedness is forgiven by Almighty God; so let us all, here and now, kneel down and pray to Him to forgive us our sins as we hope ourselves to be forgiven'—may perhaps make a fitting end to this story. Certain it is that when the prayer was prayed, and when those earnest tones went up to Heaven, Faith's little heart swelled with such love for her father and such devotion to Mrs Mortimer that she could scarcely contain herself.

A minute or two later Lady Ludlow was clasping Diana to her heart, kissing her and forgiving her. Sir Charles was remarking, 'Tut, tut, tut—this has been an odd business! But I *do* think we can get back to Haredale if we are quick about it.' Off he went to speak about the carriage being brought to the door, and by-and-by Mrs Fennimore and her party returned to Kendal House.

On that journey back many words were spoken; and it was there and then decided that each one of

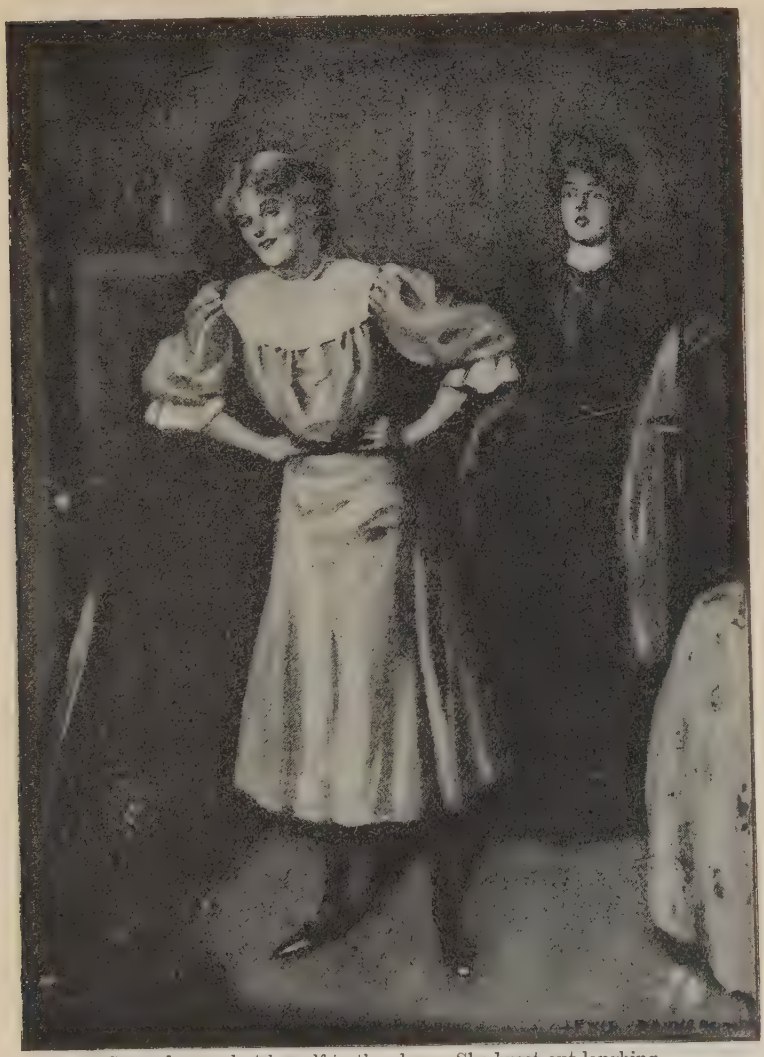
the girls who had tried to humiliate Faith should have a chance of doing otherwise—that Sophy in particular should be forgiven, and this sin should not be brought up against her.

'Oh dear,' said Sophy that evening to Kathleen, 'I never could have believed that confession was so easy after all! Why, my heart is twenty times lighter! I scarcely know how to contain myself, I feel so happy!'

THE END.

Edinburgh :
Printed by W. & R. Chambers, Limited.

From A GIRL FROM AMERICA, by L. T. MEADE (see p. 2).



Consuelo gazed at herself in the glass. She burst out laughing.

Drawn by LEWIS BAUMER.

From MYSIE, by MAY BALDWIN (see p. 9).

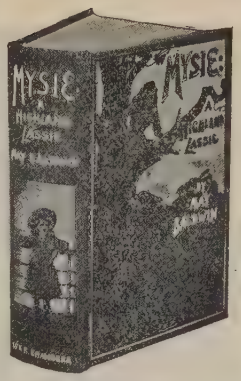
Neither of them . . . saw till it was quite near a boat manned by Jamie and another Highlander, with the Colonel at the helm.

Drawn by A. S. BOYD.

Books by May Baldwin. Published at 5s.

MYSIE: A Highland Lassie. (Gilt top.)
By **May Baldwin.**
With Eight Illustrations by A. S. Boyd.

Miss May Baldwin has never before planted her characters in the Scottish Highlands. In this story she follows the career of Mysie on her voyage from India, and afterwards at her uncle's residence in Scotland. Mysie is clever, full of resource, brave and adventurous, and is the admiration of all on board the Indian liner during a hurricane. In the Highlands she is a merry tomboy, misunderstood and disliked by her sisters, one of whom, by her unkindness, causes her serious trouble. Mysie is quaint and unusual in her talk, but straightforward and truthful, and writes wonderful romances for her years. But these are surpassed by her own story, which is full of interest, and inculcates in the telling lessons of courage, helpfulness, and unselfishness. There is not a dull page in this winning and attractive tale.



PEG'S ADVENTURES IN PARIS:
A School Tale. By **May Baldwin.**
With Eight Illustrations by W. Rainey.

Miss Baldwin, whose touch never fails when picturing school-girl life, here introduces us to the lively inmates of Madame D'Arblay's *pensionnat* in a fine suburb of Paris. The girls are of the most cosmopolitan character; and Margaret Power, or "Peg," is a highly spirited English girl who says what she thinks irrespective of other people's feelings, and not infrequently rides rough-shod over rules and regulations in the accomplishment of her plans. She keeps every one in hot water, and has adventures at the Louvre, Père-la-Chaise, the Hôtel de Ville, and Eiffel Tower. When "Peg" is around dullness is impossible. Girls are certain to read this story with avidity.

THE SUNSET ROCK:
A Story for Girls. By **May Baldwin.**
Eight Illustrations by Harold Copping.

A London maiden, the daughter of a K.C., is sent to live in a humble cottage in Cornwall because of an act of insubordination in school, for which she is not wholly to blame. How she is tamed and humbled, and at the same time strengthened in character by contact with an unselfish cousin and some wholesome-minded Cornish girls, is related here with much spirit and unfailing humour. She does some brave and unselfish deeds, saves two lives from a wreck and her brother Freddy and a friend from death in a smuggler's cave. The reader will agree with Freddy when he said, "Thanks awfully for cheering my sister. I think she's jolly brave; and so are you all. And we've had a ripping time here."

"*The Sunset Rock*, by May Baldwin, a really delightful Cornish story, containing some excellent characterisation, especially of the rustics, who are portrayed with such humour and sympathy; indeed, *The Sunset Rock* is quite the best story of its kind we have seen for a very long time, and the illustrations by Harold Copping are exceedingly well done."—*Lady.*

From A DISCONTENTED SCHOOL-GIRL, by R. JACBERNS (see p. 11).

Pat rushed into the girls' sitting-room one afternoon, waving a letter above her head.

Drawn by PERCY TARRANT.

Books at 5s.

By RAYMOND JACBERNS, AGNES GIBERNE, and the Author of "TIP-CAT."

A DISCONTENTED SCHOOLGIRL.

(Gilt top.) By **Raymond Jacberns.**

With Eight Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.

There are many types of schoolgirl here, sketched with truthfulness and humour, but the tale is mainly about Annette Warwick, who from easy circumstances is reduced to comparative poverty. She goes with her mother to a smaller house than they formerly lived in, and attends a less fashionable school, but one in which the discipline is better fitted to train her for the work of life. Here she is indolent and lacking in self-control, and gives her head-mistress and teachers a great deal of trouble. Later she learns that poverty is no disgrace, and gradually awakens to the importance of making the very best of one's circumstances, with resulting happiness.

THE GIRL AT THE DOWER HOUSE, AND AFTERWARD. (Gilt edges.)

By **Agnes Giberne.**

With Eight Illustrations by J. Finnemore.

(Also in plain edges, 4s.)

The girl at the Dower House, her mother, the vicar, and his very unconventional daughter, the central character around whom the interest of the story mainly hangs, play their part in a drama which looks as if it would end in tragedy, until the heroine, wiser through suffering, awakens to her true interests, and chooses the better part.

TOM'S BOY.

By the **Author of "Laddie," "Tip-Cat,"** &c.

With Eight Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.

Tom Bannister, an only son, with three elder sisters who adore him, falls in love at twenty with pretty Susie Primrose, and, partly because the old Squire is against it, "takes a leap over the hedge of matrimony." There is an idyllic honeymoon, and after "Boy" is born they are settled in semi-genteel quarters in London, and Tom Bannister has an uphill fight for mere bread and butter at literary work. The idea creeps into Susie's mind, which circumstances tend to foster, that Tom wishes to make it up with the old folks and leave her out. Incidents of sunshine and shadow follow in quick succession.

POMONA. (Gilt edges.)

By the **Author of "Laddie," "Tip-Cat,"** &c.

With Eight Illustrations by R. Barnes.

(Also in plain edges, 4s.)

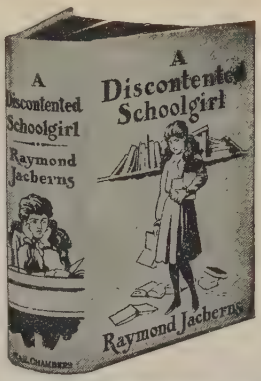
A fine tale, rich in humour and pathos, and abounding in moral lessons. The wonderful fortunes of the chief characters will be followed with eager interest by all who know and appreciate the beautiful and original work of this talented writer.

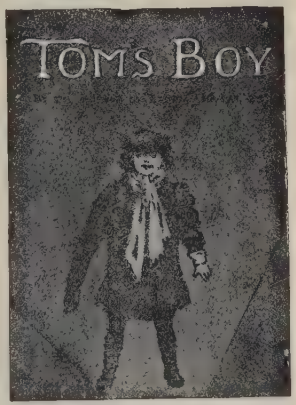
DON.

By the **Author of "Laddie," "Tip-Cat,"** &c.

With Eight Illustrations by J. Finnemore.

"Written in a bright and sunny manner that is pleasant to read. . . . It may be eminently recommended for young girls, and that of itself in these days is a very desirable quality for a book to possess."—*Manchester Guardian.*





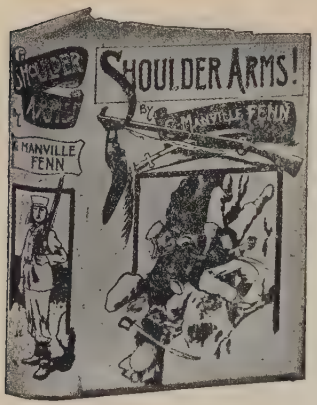
A Tribute to the Author of "Laddie," &c.

"To the Author of *Laddie*, &c.

"THE WOMEN'S TEMPLE,
CHICAGO, *Oct.* 29, '95.

"BELOVED UNKNOWN FRIEND,—I have just finished *Don*, given me by Lady Henry Somerset. My secretary, Miss Gordon, has just read it aloud to me after the fatigues of our National Convention of Temperance Women at Baltimore. It has made us better, tenderer, more aspiring towards worth and gentleness of soul. . . . I know how strictly you preserve your incognito, but perhaps you will not mind receiving this loving word through your publishers. That you are a woman I feel so sure that I dare to address you thus endearingly.—Your loyal subject, FRANCES WILLARD."

Books by G. Manville Fenn. Published at 5s.



SHOULDER ARMS!

By **G. Manville Fenn.**

Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

Here we are introduced to two soldiers' sons at a military school in England, where they have a ripping time together. Again, in India, we find them marching amongst the hills in the Maharajah's country along with a brave regiment nicknamed the "Die Firsts." The story of their capture and rescue will be read with avidity.

WALSH THE WONDER-WORKER.

By **G. Manville Fenn.**

Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

Alf. Carr and Frank Wargrave attempt to solve the mystery surrounding the person of Mr Walsh, who, from his cleverness and his experiments in chemistry, is regarded by the superstitious country-folks as a suspicious character and as the Wonder-Worker.

CHARGE! or, Briton and Boer.

By **G. Manville Fenn.**

Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

The homestead of an English settler is visited by a Boer commando headed by an Irish renegade, who carries off Val Moray, a hot-blooded, independent lad of eighteen. Val makes an unavailing resistance, but watches his chance and escapes.

VINCE THE REBEL; or, The Sanctuary in the Bog.

By **G. Manville Fenn.**

Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

Relates the troubles at Mere Abbey—a fine south of England mansion surrounded by bogs and woodlands—during the reign of James II.

ROY ROYLAND; or, The Young Castellan.

By **G. Manville Fenn.**

With Eight Illustrations by W. Boucher.

A highly interesting tale of the English Civil War, which relates how the brave lad Roy Royland defended the family stronghold while his father was away fighting for the king.

THE BLACK TOR: A Tale of the Reign of James I.

By **G. Manville Fenn.**

With Eight Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

A feud between two great families is healed in the effort made against a common enemy. The manly and generous youths who represent the two families will be sure to enlist the sympathy of the young reader.

FIX BAY'NETS! or, The Regiment in the Hills.

By **G. Manville Fenn.**

Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

A military story of thrilling interest, which follows the fortunes of several British soldiers in contests with the warlike tribes in the hill-country of India.

STAN LYNN; or, A Boy's Adventures in China. By **G. Manville Fenn.**
Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

Stan Lynn, fresh from an English school, enters a large Chinese merchant's warehouse, where his taste for adventure is soon gratified by being called upon to assist in the defence of the place against Chinese robbers. On the way to visit the plantations of the firm he is kidnapped. After his escape he has a hot time of it in helping to defend the station from Chinese pirates.

DIAMOND DYKE; or, The Lone Farm on the Veldt. By **G. Manville Fenn.**
With Eight Illustrations by W. Boucher.

Vandyke Emson and his half-brother Joseph are engaged in ostrich-farming in South Africa. There are hunting scenes, adventures with lions, swollen rivers to cross, wagon journeys; and a long period of illness and disaster on the part of Joseph, when he is nursed by Dyke, who proves himself a genuine hero.

REAL GOLD. By **G. Manville Fenn.**
With Eight Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

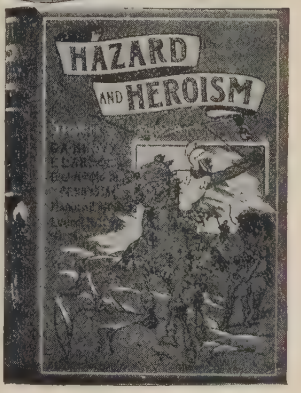
Transports the reader to Peru. Colonel Campion, his son Perry, and Cyril Norton show great pluck and endurance, and brave innumerable dangers from Indians in their search for seeds of the cinchona in order to increase the world's supply of quinine.

STEADY AND STRONG. By **G. A. Henty, G. M. Fenn, John Oxenham, Louis Becke, R. E. Francillon,** &c.
Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

This volume starts with four stories by G. A. Henty, followed immediately by a stirring West African yarn by G. M. Fenn. Mr John Oxenham has a well-told tale of school-life, and Louis Becke relates a marvellously successful voyage after treasure. There is a story of the Macedonian Insurrection, and a series of powerful tales of Western life in America by William Atkinson.

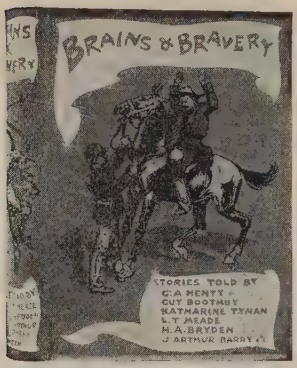
HAZARD AND HEROISM. By **G. A. Henty, Louis Tracy, Harold Bindloss, Edwin Lester Arnold, Lieut.-Col. A. F. Mockler-Ferryman,** &c.
Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

This volume contains no fewer than five short stories by G. A. Henty. "Iyvinda," by Edwin Lester Arnold, is a rare example of a story which enables us to realise early Britain with Roman and Caledonian in conflict in the first century. Lieut.-Col. Mockler-Ferryman supplies a Tibetan tale; and the story of Waterloo is retold, in a vivid narrative, by one who was an actor there.



VENTURE AND VALOUR. By **G. A. Henty, A. Conan Doyle, G. M. Fenn,** &c.
Eight Illustrations by W. Boucher.

It need only be mentioned that it contains work by G. A. Henty, G. M. Fenn, A. Conan Doyle, Tom Gallon, David Ker, James Payn, W. W. Jacobs, F. T. Bullen, Gordon Stables, D. L. Johnstone, and others, to show its quality and interest.



BRAINS AND BRAVERY. By **G. A. Henty, Guy Boothby, H. A. Bryden,** &c.
Eight Illustrations by Arthur Rackham.

Includes four stories from the pen of G. A. Henty. All the tales, the scenes of which are laid in various parts of the globe, bear out the title of the book, and inculcate some moral truth.

COURAGE AND CONFLICT. By **G. A. Henty, G. Manville Fenn, F. T. Bullen, Fred Whishaw,** &c.
With Eight Illustrations by W. Boucher.

The story by G. A. Henty is one of pioneering in the days of the early settlers in America; G. M. Fenn tells a funny seaside story; while Andrew Balfour, Captain North, Walter Thornbury, James Patey, Fred Whishaw, Harold Bindloss, and others contribute stories of peril, adventure, and heroism in the hour of danger.

PERIL AND PROWESS. By **G. A. Henty, A. Conan Doyle, D. Ker, G. Manville Fenn, W. W. Jacobs,** &c.
With Eight Illustrations by W. Boucher.

Among the contents of this volume are two adventure stories by G. A. Henty, and "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley," a South African tale by A. Conan Doyle, his first contribution to periodical literature. W. W. Jacobs tells one of his inimitable sea-stories; while the other tales have scenes laid in Africa, India, and North and South America.

DASH AND DARING. By **G. A. Henty, G. Manville Fenn, D. Ker,** &c.
Eight Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

This volume opens with two stories by G. A. Henty, one of which is a tale of Cuba and the Buccaneers, the other of the Cornish Coast; these are followed by three tales of peril and heroism by G. Manville Fenn, and a story of the Peninsular War by W. H. G. Kingston; while the remainder, by D. Ker, Reginald Horsley, and other capable writers, are brimful of adventure.

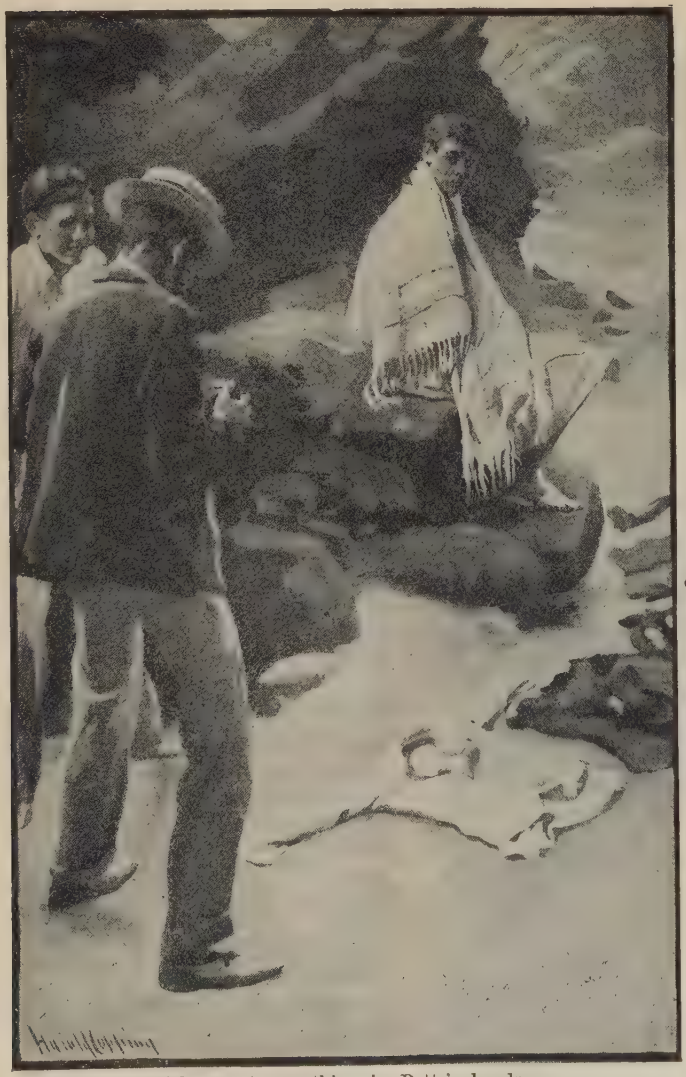
GRIT AND GO. By **G. A. Henty, Guy Boothby, D. Christie Murray,** &c.
With Eight Illustrations by W. Rainey.

Mr G. A. Henty relates a story of a shipping firm, showing how dishonesty and wrong-dealing never pay in the long-run. Guy Boothby tells a strong story of revenge. D. Christie Murray is at his best in "The Silver Lever;" and so are H. A. Bryden in a South African story, and D. L. Johnstone in "Knights of El Dorado."

BROUGHT TO HEEL; or, The Breaking-in of St Dunstan's. By **Kent Carr.**
Eight Illustrations by Harold Copping.

A healthy, breezy tale of school-life, abounding in interesting and exciting incidents and situations, including cricket matches, midnight feasts in the dormitory, and all the byplay incident to a public school.

From WELL PLAYED! by ANDREW HOME (see p. 18).



Click! went something in Potts's hands.

Drawn by HAROLD COPPING.

Books at 5s.

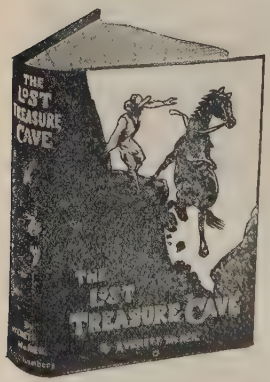
By ANDREW HOME, EVERETT McNEIL, and DAVID LAWSON JOHNSTONE.

WELL PLAYED! (Gilt top.)
By **Andrew Home.**
Eight Illustrations by Harold Copping.

Here Mr Andrew Home introduces us at once to Tom Potts, Jim Ransome, and a Dutch boy, camping out. Immediately things of a peculiar and extraordinary kind begin to happen, and these carry the reader with interest to the last page. Not until then is the secret unravelled why Leonard Banks ran away, getting into the wrong ship, with subsequent adventures. Mr Home knows exactly what interests schoolboys, and in *Well Played!* he has provided a feast of good things for his boy friends.

THE BOYS OF BADMINSTER:
A School Tale. By **Andrew Home.**
With Eight Illustrations by C. M. Sheldon.

When we are introduced to the boys, we find that a curious transformation has been wrought in the case of the hero, which causes no end of complications and adventures. The author is as bright, entertaining, wholesome, and true to life as ever.



THE LOST TREASURE CAVE; or, Adventures with the Cowboys of Colorado.
By **Everett McNeil.**
With Eight Illustrations by W. M. Cary.

A tale of absorbing interest, and it stamps its author as a writer who is bound to become a first favourite with youthful readers. He writes in a delightfully breezy and buoyant style; and, while his pages are full of exciting adventures, he does not forget that humorous incidents add greatly to the enjoyment of a well-told tale. From start to finish it is evident that he is at home with ranch-life in the Far West.

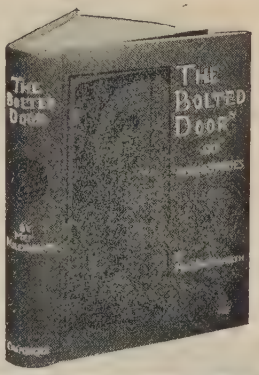
THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE COAST.
By **David Lawson Johnstone.**
Twenty-one Illustrations by W. Boucher.
(Gilt edges, also plain edges, 4s.)

"A lode of that precious metal which went to the making of *Treasure Island* and *Catriona*."—*Morning Leader.*

Books by Mrs Molesworth. Published at 3s. 6d.

THE BOLTED DOOR. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Charmingly Illustrated by Lewis Baumer.

Nine simple stories by this accomplished writer. The first shows how some young people, prompted by curiosity and by an act of disobedience, are unwittingly the means of renewing a broken friendship. All the other tales have some special quality of interest and entertainment.



THE BLUE BABY. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Charmingly Illustrated by Lewis Baumer.

Ten short but characteristic stories by this favourite writer. The work of Mrs Molesworth always possesses interest and distinction; and no one better fills in those natural touches of child-life which make her books so charming.

"MY PRETTY" AND HER LITTLE BROTHER "TOO." **Mrs Molesworth.**
Charmingly Illustrated by Lewis Baumer.

In this volume Mrs Molesworth presents ten short stories. Some of the tales have a Christmas flavour; all convey in an attractive form some lessons which young folks, and old folks too, would not be the worse for learning.

THE THREE WITCHES.
By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Charmingly Illustrated by Lewis Baumer.

Mrs Molesworth is here quite at home in delineating how certain young people, who "like strange and mysterified things better than anything else in the world," have their wishes gratified.

THE BOYS AND I. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Seventeen Illustrations by Lewis Baumer.

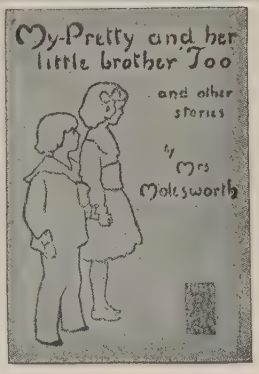
The Boys and I is intended for children, and professes to be written by a girl of fourteen, who records in a simple and child-like way all that happened five years before, when her father and mother went to China, and she and her brothers were left in the charge of "Uncle Geoff."

HOODIE. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Seventeen Illustrations by Lewis Baumer.

This story is of a rather naughty little girl who at first has a mistaken idea that she is out of favour with everybody, but who is brought to a better mind by an illness.

HERMY. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Seventeen Illustrations by Lewis Baumer.

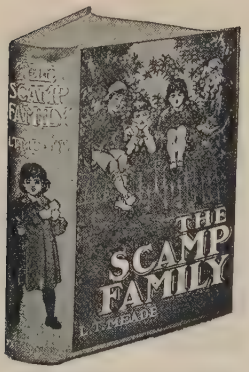
Mrs Molesworth is at her best in delineating child-life and child-ways, and the story of Hermione Leighton will be as great a favourite as *Hoodie*.



ROBIN REDBREAST. **Mrs Molesworth.**
With Six Illustrations by Robert Barnes.

Robin Redbreast is the name of a pretty, cosy-looking house near the village of Thetford, which is inhabited by Lady Myrtle Goodacre, around whom, and the young girls Frances and Jacinth Mildmay, Miss Alison Mildmay, and others, a clever and effective story revolves.

Books by L. T. Meade. Published at 3s. 6d.



THE SCAMP FAMILY. By **L. T. Meade.**
Eight Illustrations by A. Talbot Smith.

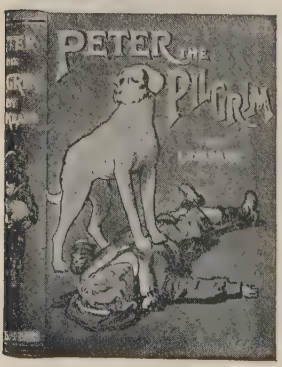
A delightful narrative of how one family influenced another for good. The Scamp Family consists of four jolly, fascinating, but terribly naughty children, whose parents are dead, and whose guardian is unable to keep them in hand. They get acquainted with the young Messagers next door in a very unconventional way, and the intercourse brings better influences into their lives. They are guided, helped, and transformed into more normal characters. There are interesting adventures in the country and in London, where good is done to slum children. The whole narrative is of the liveliest and most interesting kind.

SUE. By **L. T. Meade.**
With Six Illustrations by Clement Flower.

Sue, a sewing-machine girl, is an orphan, and supports herself and her invalid brother. They yearn for a glimpse of country life, of which neither of them knows anything. Connie, who is a friend of Sue, and works in the same factory, is a very pretty and engaging girl. Unfortunately she is misled by a companion and falls into the hands of a London thief, who uses her as a decoy.

PETER THE PILGRIM. By **L. T. Meade.**
With Six Illustrations by Harold Copping.

Introduces us to a poor family in London, and particularly to Loo and Peter, who try to translate the *Pilgrim's Progress* into a reality. One day Loo and Peter start on pilgrimage, and it is their adventures and misadventures which make this narrative a most charming tale for young folks.



DUMPS: A Plain Girl. By **L. T. Meade.**
With Six Illustrations by R. Lillie.

"Dumps" has lost her mother; and her father, a very learned man, unfortunately allows the young girl to live too much her own life. The story shows how she developed her mental and moral qualities by the aid of her companions, as well as that of Grace Donnithorne, the lady who becomes her step-mother.

PETRONELLA. By **L. T. Meade.**
With Six Illustrations by W. Rainey.

Petronella Laurie is shown to us in Miss Malet's school at fourteen, tall, awkward, and untrained; while Polly Playfair is wild, disobedient, and reckless, but generous and affectionate.

COSEY CORNER. By **L. T. Meade.**
Eighteen Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.

Mrs L. T. Meade here tells how four children show great ingenuity and cleverness in playing at keeping a farm, and manage to support themselves for a time from the proceeds.

QUEEN ROSE. By **L. T. Meade.**
With Six Illustrations by J. T. Murray.

Queen Rose is the pet-name of a tall and slender, pretty and amiable girl who arrives from India at a beautiful Devonshire home, where she has the four high-spirited but strongly contrasted Dallenger girls as companions.

Books at 3s. 6d. by L. T. Meade and May Baldwin.

FOUR ON AN ISLAND. By **L. T. Meade.**
With Six Illustrations by W. Rainey.

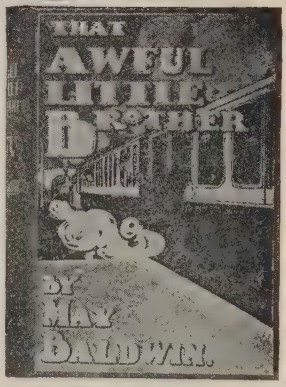
Four young people, residing at a homestead in Brazil, go off one day on a picnic, and while playing on the seashore embark in a small boat, despite orders to the contrary, drift out to sea, and at the imminent danger of their lives finally land on an uninhabited island.

"This is a very bright description of modern Crusoes."—*Graphic.*

THE CHILDREN OF WILTON CHASE.
By **L. T. Meade.**
With Six Illustrations by Everard Hopkins.

Here we are introduced to a houseful of healthy, high-spirited children, and, as the story develops, the character of each child is displayed.

"Both entertaining and instructive."—*Spectator.*



DORA: A High School Girl. **May Baldwin.**
Six Illustrations by Mabel L. Attwell.

Mrs Cockburn and her daughters Dora and Ivonne are obliged to leave their fine country home for apartments in London. The girls are sent to Chelsea High School, where they have some highly interesting experiences. Dora, an unaffected and straightforward girl, gets into trouble at the very outset, but is befriended by General Seaforth, who becomes a lifelong benefactor to the family. Dora helps her mother and sister by her industry; and when a fortune is left to her the condition of the Cockburns brightens. The story is full of lovable characters drawn in Miss Baldwin's original and inimitable style, and every girl who reads it will be charmed with this delightful school-tale.

"Calculated to prove attractive not alone to juveniles, but to 'girls' of all ages."—*Freeman's Journal.*

THAT AWFUL LITTLE BROTHER.
By **May Baldwin.**
With Six Illustrations by Chas. Pears.

The record of a delightful and unconventional family. The doings of the Sylvesters after they remove from country to town are described with fun and humour, seasoned with quaint wisdom.

"A rattling good story."—*Nottingham Express.*

THE GIRLS OF ST GABRIEL'S.
By **May Baldwin.**
With Six Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.

The story of life at a French school. The contrasts between English and French character and ways are graphically drawn. Ursula rebels at first at the strict discipline, and gets into trouble herself and drags others along with her, but ultimately she begins to appreciate the good points of the French girls, learns where her own character is defective, and strives to improve.

"We recommend our readers on the lookout for a suitable present for a girl to keep *The Girls of St Gabriel's* in mind."—*Dundee Courier.*

Books by May Baldwin. Published at 3s. 6d.

THE FOLLIES OF FIFI.

By **May Baldwin.**

With Six Illustrations by A. S. Boyd.

In *A Popular Girl* Miss May Baldwin gave a clever and entertaining picture of a girls' school in Germany. Here we are introduced to a school for young girls at St Odain, France, where the gay and light-hearted Fifi is always doing either very foolish or very wise things. An English girl, a German girl, and Fifi come to be known as "the Three Nations," and some remarkable escapades are recorded. One of the lessons enjoined is that it is not talking that is all-important, but being and doing. To be good and to do one's duty is the chief concern. There are no dull pages in Miss Baldwin's narrative, which gives a correct and living picture of what school-life means to young people in France.

A POPULAR GIRL: A Tale of School Life in Germany.

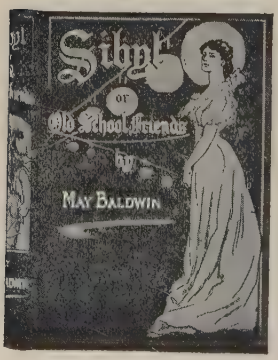
By **May Baldwin.**

With Six Illustrations by Jessie Wilson.

A bright and naturally told story of school-girl life in Germany, in which the contrasts with school-life in this country are strongly brought out. The lady principal, Fräulein Luise, cautions the heroine about her over-anxiety to be the best girl-scholar; in spite of this she works openly and secretly for this end, which is gained at the expense, for a time, of her health and her memory.

"Any young lady to whom Santa Claus, in the guise of a bachelor uncle, or under any other shape or form, brings Miss May Baldwin's story, *A Popular Girl*, may congratulate herself on having got one of the very best volumes."—*Glasgow Herald.*

"This is exactly the kind of book to put into the hands of girls on the verge of womanhood, and the sequel, hinted at by the authoress, will be awaited with interest."—*Manchester City News.*



SIBYL; or, Old School Friends.

By **May Baldwin.**

With Six Illustrations by W. Rainey.

The sequel to *A Popular Girl*, in which the old characters reappear, wiser and more mature, yet not less interesting and entertaining in their sayings and doings. Sibyl passes through a period of trial, but comes out triumphant and stronger in character than ever.

"Will certainly receive a warm welcome, for it forms a sequel to *A Popular Girl*. The disadvantages which are supposed to belong to a sequel are not apparent here, and the multitude of girls who must have wished to know more of the heroine when they ended the former book will now be delighted and satisfied."—*The World.*

A PLUCKY GIRL; or, The Adventures of "Miss Nell."

By **May Baldwin.**

Six Illustrations by Jessie Macgregor.

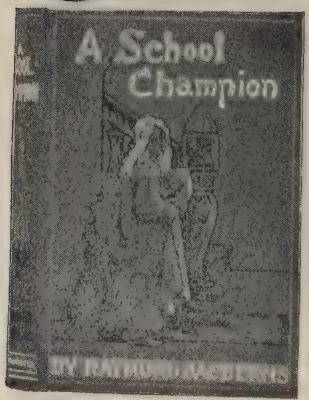
The heroine is a very lively girl, wilful, bright, and unconventional in her sayings and doings, yet kind-hearted withal. At one time sweet, shrewd, and astute, she is at another the very impersonation of mischief.

From THAT IMP MARCELLA, by RAYMOND JACBERNS (see p. 24).

Staring fixedly at the right-hand figure . . . Marcella crept nearer and nearer until she reached the first step.

Drawn by W. H. C. GROOME.

Books by Raymond Jacberns. Published at 3s. 6d.



"Whoever Raymond Jacberns really is her books deserve to be widely known, for they are just such as can be placed in the hands of children without anxiety as to their influence."—*Speaker.*

THAT IMP MARCELLA.

By **Raymond Jacberns.**
Six Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

Marcella is the impersonation of fun, mischief, and high animal spirits, and leads her guardian, Colonel Strangeways, a troubled life first in France and then in England. She is self-willed and passionate; and how she was broken-in and educated to unselfish thought for others is here told with naturalness and power. Marcella is the unconscious instrument in ending the selfish seclusion of a great-aunt in England, with the result that she becomes a kind aunt to her niece, who in turn becomes a comforting niece to her. Marcella learns to put her own wishes in the background, and to think more of duty than of personal likes and dislikes.

THE RECORD TERM.

By **Raymond Jacberns.**
With Ten Illustrations by Hilda Cowham.

This story mainly concerns the life of the sisters Becky and Enid and their cousin Wyneth, who are sent by Aunt Mollie to a high-class girls' school, where many things happen to test character, ability, and the sense of right and wrong. The lady-superintendent meets with an accident, and although this is the case the pupils, each in her own way, strive to make it a record term. Becky attempts to write stories, gets into trouble, and drags Wyneth with her. The latter is a dreamy girl, with strange fancies, who tries to rule her life according to the rather impossible injunctions of a dead mother, and in consequence she is frequently misunderstood. The endeavour to make a record term failed, but the girls learned true wisdom, and resolved to become conscientious pupils in the new session.

A SCHOOL CHAMPION: A Girl's School Story.

By **Raymond Jacberns.**
With Ten Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.

Tekla and Freda Marsden, who are orphans, suddenly find themselves launched into school-life, where their previous unconventional life renders them impatient of restraint. Tekla starts with the idea that she must help somebody. How her philanthropy took a wrong direction, and led to serious consequences, is here unfolded.

CRAB COTTAGE.

By **Raymond Jacberns.**
With Six Illustrations by J. Menzies.

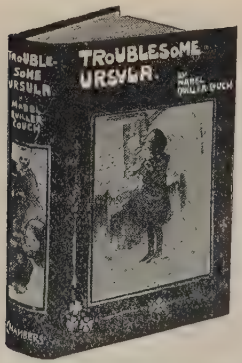
The family at Nunnery Farm have lost father and mother; and Hester Selwyn, the eldest, guides the household, but has trouble at first with Jenny. The Trevors of Crab Cottage and the Selwyns have picnics and fishing excursions together. Jenny develops in self-help and womanliness, and there are happy results through the wholesome and stimulating intercourse between the families.

From TROUBLESOME URSULA, by M. QUILLER-COUCH (see p. 26).

Drawn by MABEL ATTWELL.

Books at 3s. 6d.

By MABEL QUILLER-COUCH, the Author of "TIP-CAT," Mrs G. DE HORNE VAIZEY, &c.



TROUBLESOME URSULA.

By **Mabel Quiller-Couch.**

With Eight Illustrations by Mabel Attwell.

From the first page to the last we follow with unabated interest the fortunes of Ursula, who, reluctantly compelled to leave home to reside with her grandmother, rebels, and makes herself disagreeable in many petty ways. A grave mistake brings serious trouble upon her, but through tribulation Ursula learns her most valuable lessons. Her experiences away from home have a wonderful effect upon her character, which grows in tenderness and sympathy, and in the end we find her acting the pleasing rôle of "a little mother to everybody."

GAY. By **Author of "Laddie," "Tip-Cat."**

With Six Illustrations by Percy Tarrant.

Gay and Do are delightful studies. The grown-up Oliver Bruce and the young folks affect one another's lives in a real and unlooked-for way. His friendship for and kindness to Gay and Do lead him straight into the heart of a family mystery, which is unravelled in the last pages.

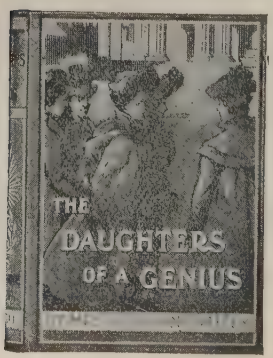
"Prominent parts are played by two of the most winsome youngsters who ever existed in fiction."—*The Lady.*

BELLE. By **Author of "Laddie," "Tip-Cat."**

With Six Illustrations by G. Nicolet.

The author of *Laddie* again shows her skill in sketching an interesting group of characters in an English country town, amongst whom Belle, Jerry, and Mark Hastings stand out conspicuously.

"An ideal book for girls."—*Weekly Sun.*



THE DAUGHTERS OF A GENIUS.

By **Mrs G. De Horne Vaizey.**

With Six Illustrations by John Menzies.

The six children of a musical genius are left alone in the world to fight their way, and this story gives a narrative of their brave endeavours in a London flat. How each one used his or her gifts for the benefit of the family and the outside world is here told in a pleasant manner.

A GOOD-HEARTED GIRL; or, A Present-Day Heroine. By **Emma Marshall.**

With Six Illustrations by J. Finnemore.

Tells how Althea, a noble-souled young woman, helps to undo a great deal of evil brought on those who had trusted her father. There is a slight love-interest giving piquancy to the narrative, which is bright and wholesome, and full of excellent moral lessons.

THE UNJUST STEWARD; or, The Minister's Debt. By **Mrs Oliphant.**

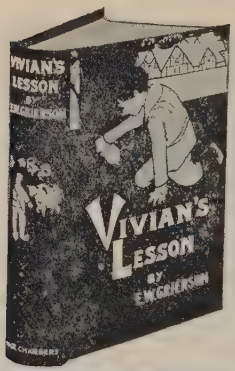
With Six Illustrations by J. Finnemore.

"Mrs Oliphant was never more happily inspired than in writing this story."—*Scotsman.*

From VIVIAN'S LESSON, by ELIZABETH W. GRIERSON (see p. 28).

They made such a pretty picture that there was quite a burst of applause.

Drawn by HILDA COWHAM.



VIVIAN'S LESSON.

By **Elizabeth W. Grierson.**

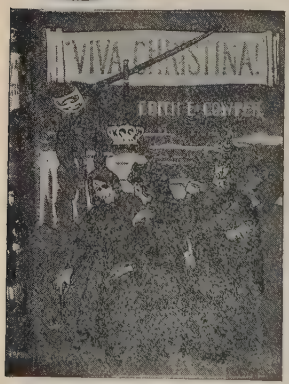
With Ten Illustrations by Hilda Cowham.

Miss E. W. Grierson, who has written attractively about Border Ballads and Edinburgh for young people, here tells a plain tale with simplicity, directness, and great literary skill. In a perfectly natural way the authoress draws an effective moral lesson from Vivian's great weakness of not owning up when in the wrong. It is made clear how one false step leads to many more, rendering it difficult to regain the right path. But how this is at last accomplished is attractively told in this pleasing story.

YOUNG DENYS. By **Eleanor C. Price.**

With Six Illustrations by G. Nicolet.

This story opens by giving a picture of Winchester early in the last century, and moves to France, whither the hero had been taken by the press-gang. He comes in contact with the great Napoleon before his last fatal effort at Waterloo. There is a pretty thread of love-making which, after being interrupted, ends to the satisfaction of every one.



"VIVA CHRISTINA!"

By **Edith E. Cowper.**

Six Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

This tale follows the fortunes mainly of a group of soldiers attached to the British Legion during the Carlist war, when Queen Christina of Spain, by means of British help, was enabled to vanquish Don Carlos.

O'ER TARTAR DESERTS; or, English and Russian in Central Asia.

By **David Ker.**

With Six Illustrations by J. Finnemore.

Relates the remarkable adventures of an explorer named Livingstone Archer, his son Harry, Count Bulatoff and his son Yury, and others, who, in executing a commission from the Czar, visit the Caucasus, cross Tartar deserts, and are launched on a perilous train of incidents.

PRISONER AMONG PIRATES.

By **David Ker.**

With Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

A stirring tale of adventure in the Mediterranean in the middle of the seventeenth century, in which two English lads, Jack Narborough and George Steel, play an important part.

LOGAN THE MINGO: a Story of the Frontier. By **Edward S. Ellis.**

With numerous Illustrations.

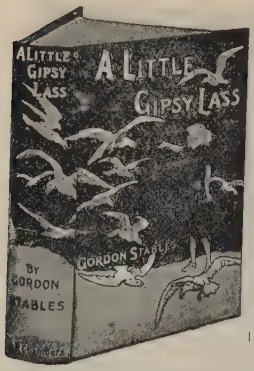
Indian tales always interest young people, and this is one of the best, with a basis of history, concerning certain episodes in the French and Indian wars. Arthur Oakland and his cousin pass through many exciting adventures, and meet Logan the Mingo, who was a genuine character, and whose career is followed to the close.

From A LITTLE GIPSY LASS, by GORDON STABLES (see p. 30).

The girl simply lifted the latch and entered without ceremony.
Drawn by W. RAINEY.

Books at 3s. 6d.

By GORDON STABLES, ANDREW HOME, and J. M. OXLEY.



A LITTLE GIPSY LASS.

By **Gordon Stables.**

With Six Illustrations by W. Rainey.

Here we follow the fortunes and misfortunes of Lotty Lee, a winsome gipsy lass, and Antony Blake, a handsome young English gentleman who is caravanning in the Scottish Highlands. We have glimpses of both the bright and sordid sides of show-life, of caravan life in the "Gipsy Queen," and of adventures by water, when Lotty is blown out to sea and rescued in a marvellous manner. The heroine is a very charming character in every way, and the story is appropriately brought to a close by the discovery of her true parentage. Young readers will enjoy the romantic ending to a delightfully fresh and brightly written tale.

JACK AND BLACK. By **Andrew Home.**

With Six Illustrations by Harold Copping.

Introduces the reader to Harbury School, and sketches the adventures more particularly of Jack Holwell and Tom Black. A mystery hangs over Holwell's past life, and the persecutions of a designing relative, who employs some one to shadow him, put him in terror of his life.

THE STORY OF A SCHOOL CONSPIRACY. By **Andrew Home.**

With Twelve Illustrations by A. Monro.

How a French boy kept a whole school in hot water, and got many of the scholars into great trouble, at Westbury College, is here related with vivacity and unflagging interest.

OUT OF BOUNDS. By **Andrew Home.**

Eight Illustrations by Harold Copping.

In this collection of short stories many phases of boy-life, in and out of school, are dealt with. There are numerous adventures, some of which are on the point of ending tragically. All the stories are wholesome and entertaining, and inculcate the virtues of truth, sympathy, and bravery.

THE SPY IN THE SCHOOL: A Tale of Two Chums. By **Andrew Home.**

With Six Illustrations by W. J. Urquhart.

Melby School is an unusually lively seminary, with, unfortunately, a spy in the form of Swindells, one of the masters. We are introduced to a lot of healthy schoolboys, who are never out of hot water.

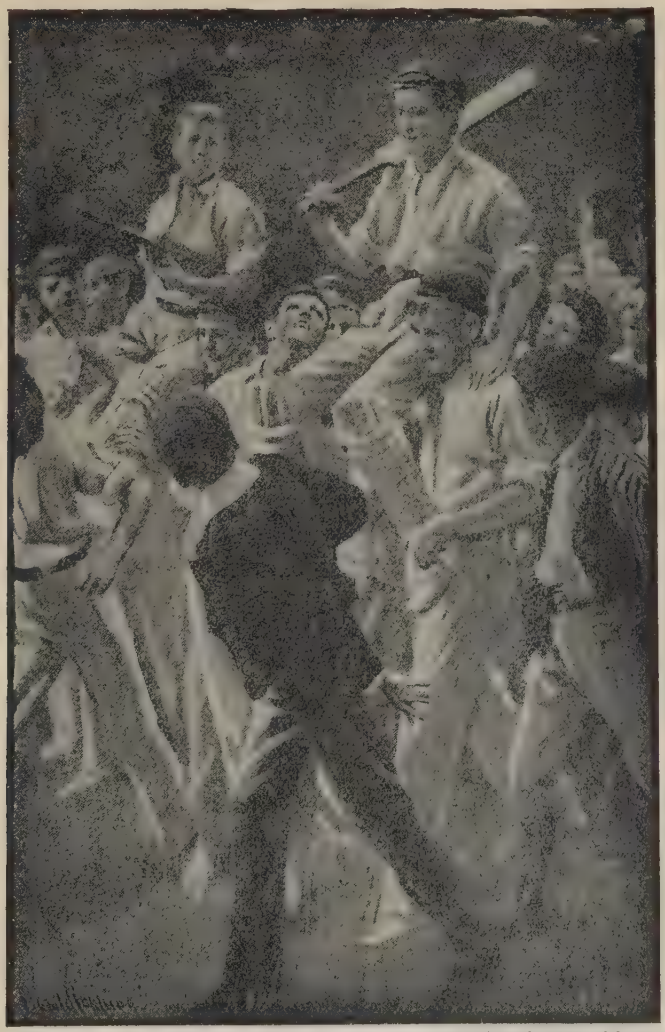
TWO BOY TRAMPS.

By **J. Macdonald Oxley.**

With Six Illustrations by H. Sandham.

Mr Oxley conducts his heroes from Edinburgh over the Atlantic and across Canada to the Pacific, where his intimate knowledge of the country enables him to delineate their numberless adventures with life-like truth and graphic power.

From THREE SCHOOL CHUMS, by JOHN FINNEMORE (see p. 32).

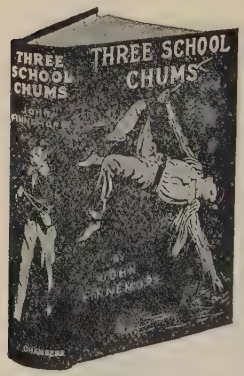


They seized upon Tom and Teddy, swung them shoulder high, and bore them to the pavilion through the cheering, shouting crowd.

Drawn by HAROLD COPPING.

Books at 3s. 6d.

By JOHN FINNEMORE, G. MANVILLE FENN, and FRED WHISHAW.



THREE SCHOOL CHUMS.

By **John Finnemore.**

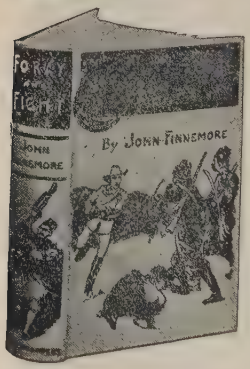
With Six Illustrations by Harold Copping.

Mr Finnemore provides a rare feast of adventure and fun in every page of this entertaining narrative of the doings of Tom Sandys, Arthur Digby, and Teddy Lester at Clapton School, where (much to the delight of all) Baldwin and his bullying and sneaking companions come off second-best in the end. This is a fine, healthy story of school-life, and will inspire boys with aspirations after true manliness and courage.

FORAY AND FIGHT. John Finnemore.

Six Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

Mr Finnemore describes the marches, skirmishes, night attacks, and ambuscades which arise in the course of fighting the "unspeakable" Turk in Macedonia. A young Englishman and a young American perform many acts of bravery in this exciting story.



THE RAJAH OF DAH. By G. M. Fenn.

With Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

Mr Fenn's practised pen here transports the reader to the Malay Peninsula, where Johnstone Murray, a keen naturalist, and his nephew Ned, along with other British residents, have many astonishing adventures and hairbreadth escapes.

THE DINGO BOYS; or, The Squatters of Wallaby Range. By G. Manville Fenn.

With Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

In this Australian story Mr Fenn enables us to follow the fortunes of an English family, from the time of their landing on the coast of Australia till their settlement at Wallaby Range. They go through many adventures in travelling inland, and in making their home in the Bush.

NIC REVEL: A White Slave's Adventures in Alligator Land. By G. Manville Fenn.

Six Illustrations by W. H. C. Groome.

Nic Revel has various encounters with salmon-poachers on his father's estate ere he is carried off by mistake along with a gang of them, and conveyed to New England. His terrible life there, and wonderful escape back to England, form a thrilling narrative.

THE BOYS OF BRIERLEY GRANGE.

By **Fred Whishaw.**

Six Illustrations by Harold Copping.

The hero, Tom Formby, is one of the most popular boys at Brierley Grange, but mystery surrounds several of his actions. There is a mysterious school-fire—a money-box is thrown into the sea—a pupil finds himself on an island without knowing how he came there, so that the headmaster and pupils have a lively time. Barnes, a sneak and coward, who hates Formby, does what he can to ruin his influence; but Tom's reputation is cleared.

Books at 3s. 6d.

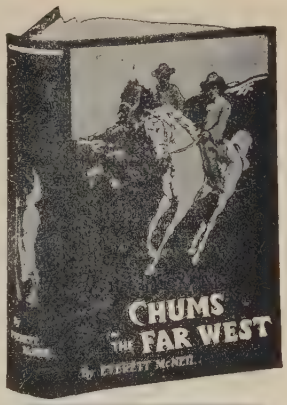
By EVERETT McNEIL, H. BARROW-NORTH, C. R. KENYON, and D. L. JOHNSTONE.

CHUMS IN THE FAR WEST.

By **Everett McNeil.**

With Nine Illustrations by W. V. Cahill.

Two Yahara High School lads receive the prize of a hunting trip in the Far West of America for being the most manly boys in the school. They have a thrilling experience with a robber, adventures with Indians, and many hairbreadth escapes.



JERRY DODDS, MILLIONAIRE.

By **H. Barrow-North.**

With Six Illustrations by Harold Copping.

Jerry Dodds is the good-hearted and open-handed son of a South African millionaire, and his fortunes are traced from the time he enters Westpool School until he is kidnapped, and recovered in a marvellous way.

THE ARGONAUTS OF THE AMAZON.

By **C. R. Kenyon.**

Six Illustrations by Arthur Rackham.

A thrilling tale of adventure in which three old chums, in the search for the Inca's treasure in the regions of the mighty Andes, procure a little steam-launch for the navigation of the Amazon and some of its feeders, such as the Ucayali.

THE WHITE PRINCESS OF THE HIDDEN CITY.

By **D. L. Johnstone.**

With Six Illustrations by W. Boucher.

Relates how Leslie Rutherford hunted up traces of a lost ancestor, in doing which he passed through innumerable dangers and adventures, discovered a strange people living in a valley of Central America, and was eventually successful.

THE REBEL COMMODORE (Paul Jones).

By **D. Lawson Johnstone.**

With Six Illustrations by W. Boucher.

A story of Galloway a hundred years ago, which opens with a description of some of the lawless doings of the smugglers. The hero is taken prisoner by Paul Jones, but makes a remarkable escape in the Firth of Forth, and afterwards aids the escape of other prisoners in the Low Countries.

IN THE LAND OF THE GOLDEN PLUME.

By **D. Lawson Johnstone.**

With Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

Mr Dennison and his sons Walter and Frank, after some experiences in a Queensland station, plunge into the wilds of New Guinea, far beyond the outposts of civilisation, encounter treacherous natives, and are in great perils in dangerous and well-nigh inaccessible places.

THE PARADISE OF THE NORTH.

By **D. Lawson Johnstone.**

With Fifteen Illustrations by W. Boucher.

Mr Johnstone transports us to the Arctic regions, where a well-equipped expedition reaches a higher latitude than that achieved by any previous explorers.

WHITE KAID OF THE ATLAS.

By **J. Maclaren Cobban.**

Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

Tom Malleson is sent as assistant to his father's agent at Mogador. His cousin supplants him and plays him false. Tom is taken to the interior as prisoner of the Kaid El Madani. He rises in favour, trains the native soldiers, performs prodigies of valour, and gains the title of the White Kaid.

THE WIZARD KING: A Story of the Last Moslem Invasion of Europe.

By **David Ker.**

Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

The hero of this story is John Sobieski, round whose marvellous career are woven stories of incident and adventure, many of which are historical.

SWEPT OUT TO SEA.

By **David Ker.**

Six Illus. by J. Ayton Symington.

Mr David Ker carries his heroes and their friends from Shetland to Cornwall; thence they are swept out to sea, and land, after numerous adventures, in the West Indies.

THE BLUE BALLOON: A Tale of the Shenandoah Valley.

By **Reginald Horsley.**

Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

The author shows even more than his usual skill and vivacity in depicting some of the thrilling scenes and episodes of the American Civil War, in which his hero and the other characters bear a part.

THE YELLOW GOD.

By **Reginald Horsley.**

Six Illustrations by W. S. Stacey.

Jack Brook and Michael O'Brien, instead of reaching Valparaiso, are shipwrecked in the Pacific, picked up from a raft, and landed in Sydney. They go inland and make one of the first great gold discoveries.

HUNTED THROUGH FIJI; or, 'Twixt Convict and Cannibal.

By **Reginald Horsley.**

Six Illus. by J. Ayton Symington.

Dr Horsley describes the fortunes of three young lads pursued by convicts and natives through Fiji in the cannibal days. The pages are crowded with adventures and hairbreadth escapes.

THE "ROVER'S" QUEST: A Story of Foam, Fire, and Fight.

By **Hugh St Leger.**

Six Illus. by J. Ayton Symington.

A tough yarn, which relates how Noel Hamilton is picked up from a boat in the Channel by a passing merchant-ship and carried into eastern seas, where he encounters all the horrors of a mutiny, a seaquake, and shipwreck; his loneliness on a barren island being shared by two fine old salts named Sam Port and Eli Grouse. How they are rescued by the *Rover*, out on a strange quest, and how this quest is accomplished, form part of an interesting narrative of sea-life.

DAUGHTER OF THE KLEPHTS; or, A Girl of Modern Greece.

By **Edward Garrett.**

Six Illustrations by W. Boucher.

"The numerous characters in the story are vivid portraitures, the very humblest has nothing of the puppet in him or her, and the story from the first page to the last is highly interesting, realistic, and natural."—*Scotsman.*

A SOLDIER OF THE LEGION.

By **D. Lawson Johnstone.**

Seventeen Illus. by W. Boucher.

The hero, George Annesley, exiled from home, performs deeds of daring in the Carlist war in Spain as a captain of guerillas, returning to England and to the good fortune which awaits him at the close of the story.

Books at 2s. 6d.

By L. T. MEADE, Mrs MOLESWORTH, AMY WALTON, JOHN FINNEMORE, &c.

PLAYMATES. By **L. T. Meade.**
Six Illustrations by G. Nicolet.

"*Playmates* is a delightful story, which will be rightly appreciated by both boys and girls."—*Dundee Advertiser.*

THE NEXT-DOOR HOUSE.
By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Six Illustrations by W. Hatherell.

"This is a children's story, about children and for children, and will be welcome in many nursery libraries."—*Glasgow Herald.*

IMOGEN. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Four Illustrations by H. A. Bone.

Shows how the simple and ingenuous Imogen, while a guest along with her mother at Grey Fells Hall, becomes a dupe of two designing girls, suffers some heartache through misplaced affection, but learns wisdom through suffering.

GREYLING TOWERS.
By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Seventeen Illus. by Percy Tarrant.

Relates how a London family took a house in the country near Greyling Towers, which held a mystery to be unravelled by the children, the gradual unfolding of which is said by one of the young people to be more interesting than all the fairy tales she has read.

WHITE TURRETS.
By **Mrs Molesworth.**
Four Illustrations by W. Rainey.

"A charming story. . . . A capital antidote to the unrest that inspires young folks that seek for some great thing to do, while the great thing for them is at their hand and at their home."—*Scotsman.*

LASSIE AND LADDIE: A Story for Little Lads and Lassies.
By **Mary D. Brine.**
Numerous Illustrations.

"Lassie" and "Laddie" have delightful times together and are very happy. The children are encouraged to show kindness to those less fortunate than themselves, and it is beautifully brought out how their thoughtfulness for others added to their own pleasure.

BLACK, WHITE, AND GRAY.
By **Amy Walton.**
Four Illus. by Robert Barnes.

Denis and Maisie, two children whose parents are in India, have a happy time at Fieldside Farm, and pass through many interesting experiences while striving to find homes for three kittens.

THE EMPIRE'S CHILDREN.
By **John Finnemore.**
Numerous Illustrations.

This book aims at giving sketches of youthful life in some of the great countries which constitute our world-wide Empire. In every case the sketch is thrown into the form of a story. Nothing makes a deeper impression on the young mind than that which pleases, and the story is more likely to please than the essay.

OUT OF REACH. By **Esmè Stuart.**
Four Illus. by Robert Barnes.

Relates the struggles of the Wests, a family of orphans, and tells who helped and who hindered their upward progress. Two of the little girls are the unwitting tools of a designing woman, whose network of deceit is discovered and exposed through their agency and that of their friend Mr Savill.

THROUGH THE FLOOD: The Story of an Out-of-the-way Place.
Illustrations. By **Esmè Stuart.**

We follow the fortunes of Farmer Graves, with his two daughters—whose characters are skilfully contrasted—the Drakes, and some subsidiary people who play a part in the little world around River Bank.

ROSE AND LAVENDER.
By **Author of "Laddie,"** &c.
Four Illustrations by H. A. Bone.

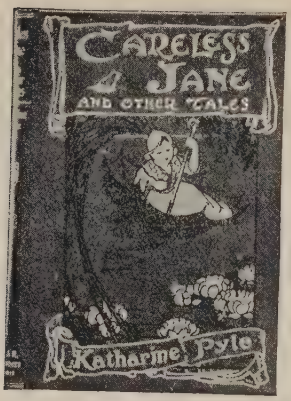
Describes the lives of two young girls; the one pretty, superficial, showy, and fond of dress; the other plain and unassuming. Specially serviceable to girls, it may be read with profit by all.

JOAN AND JERRY.
By **Mrs O'Reilly.**
Four Illus. by Herbert A. Bone.

Mrs O'Reilly here portrays the characters of two cousins, Joan and Geraldine. Joan and her mother are keeping up appearances of semi-gentility in London lodgings, and the book is chiefly taken up with the characters met in these circumstances, and how they all influenced one another for good.

WHEN WE WERE YOUNG.
By **Mrs O'Reilly.**
Four Illustrations by H. A. Bone.

Lou—a daughter of the house in a well-to-do family—describes some holiday episodes of her brothers and sisters, the discovery of a family secret, and the healing of some family differences, also her own selfishness, for which she is punished.



ABIGAIL TEMPLETON.

By **Emma Marshall.**

Four Illustrations by J. Finnemore.

The fortunes of a governess-companion to a delicate young lady in high life are here sketched with unusual truthfulness and skill, along with the difficulties and dangers of her position.

NANCY'S FANCIES.

By **E. L. Haverfield.**

Four Illus. by Percy Tarrant.

Tells the story of the heroism of a doctor's wife, whose husband is believed to be shipwrecked, struggling on alone with a little girl and boy, Nancy and Sonnie. Nancy is a dreamy, imaginative, yet practical child; she dotes on her little brother, and brings great comfort and happiness to her mother ere the unexpected return of the shipwrecked father.

CELIA'S CONQUEST.

By **L. E. Tiddeman.**

Four Illustrations by J. Wilson.

Celia Drew and Florizel, her brother, are the motherless children of an English artist, who has placed them in a home at St Etienne, to which they become greatly attached. When called on to settle with Miss Helsham at Brixton, London, Celia is inclined to rebel at first, and sister and brother wish they were back in France. How Celia was conquered by love and discipline, and how they settle with their father again at beloved St Etienne, is minutely described.

A BUNCH OF KEYS, see page 48.

CARELESS JANE.

Children's Rhymes Illustrated.

By **Katharine Pyle.**

The writer of *Careless Jane* is not only the author, but the artist as well. The verses are simple and telling, and the pictures really illustrate the text and help to tell the stories, which inculcate obedience, kindness, industry, and cleanliness.

FOUR HUNDRED ANIMAL STORIES.

Profusely Illustrated.

A varied selection of true stories of animal life, illustrating sagacity, instinct, the almost human traits of monkeys, the speaking powers of parrots, the usefulness and cleverness of many dogs, horses, elephants, together with hairbreadth escapes from lions, tigers, bears, and snakes.

MORE ANIMAL STORIES.

Including *Rab and his Friends*, by Dr John Brown. Fully Illustrated.

Like its predecessor, *Four Hundred Animal Stories*, it comprises a gathering of interesting, pathetic, and amusing animal tales from *Chambers's Journal*, and from the works of Captain Brown, Charles Boner, Edward Jesse, John M'Diarmid, and Christopher North.

THE ROMANCE OF INDUSTRY AND INVENTION.

With Thirty-four Illustrations.

There is a mixture of industrial biography and description of varied industries in this book, including iron and steel, with notices of Bessemer, Siemens, and the Krupps; the sewing-machine and its inventors and perfecters; wool and cotton; gold and diamonds; the making of big-guns, small-arms, and ammunition; cycles and cycling; steamers and sailing-ships; the post-office, telegraph, telephone, and phonograph.

THE ROMANCE OF COMMERCE.

By **J. Macdonald Oxley.**

With Fifteen Illustrations.

As the author well says: "There has been a romance of commerce no less than a romance of war. Men have shown equal enterprise and daring in the pursuit of wealth as in extending the bounds of empire, and gold has run close rivalry with glory in adding brilliant pages to the world's history."

BASIL WOOLLCOMBE, MIDSHIPMAN.

By **A. Lee Knight.**

Illus. by W. S. Stacey and others.

"A delightful book. Adventures both by sea and land does the youthful hero encounter, and hardship and peril. . . . Basil is a fine, manly fellow, and his character is well portrayed."—*Dundee Advertiser.*

Books at 2s. 6d.

By R. F. OUTCAULT, DAVID KER, H. FRITH, CHARLES R. KENYON, &c.

ADVENTURE AND ADVENTURERS.

Being True Tales of Daring, Peril, and Heroism.

With Illustrations.

This volume contains two lion-hunts related by Thomas Pringle, some of the African adventures of F. C. Selous, of Captain Lugard, and the pioneers in Mashonaland and Matabeleland. Under mountain-climbing, the exploits of Edward Whymper and W. M. Conway are described.

GREAT HISTORIC EVENTS.

Illustrated.

The Conquest of India, Indian Mutiny, French Revolution, The Crusades, The Conquest of Mexico, Napoleon's Russian Campaign.

RECENT TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE.

Illustrated.

Comprising Stanley and the Congo, Lieutenant Greely, Joseph Thomson, Livingstone, Lady Brassey, Vambéry, Burton, &c.

"A first-rate book for a reward."—*Teachers' Aid.*

BENEFICENT AND USEFUL LIVES.

With numerous Illus.

Comprising Lord Shaftesbury, George Peabody, Andrew Carnegie, Walter Besánt, Samuel Morley, Sir James Y. Simpson, Dr Arnold of Rugy, &c.

GREAT THINKERS AND WORKERS.

Numerous Illus.

Being the Lives of Thomas Carlyle, Lord Armstrong, Lord Tennyson, Charles Dickens, Sir Titus Salt, W. M. Thackeray, Sir Henry Bessemer, John Ruskin, James Nasmyth, Charles Kingsley, &c.

GOOD AND GREAT WOMEN:

A Book for Girls. Illustrated.

Comprises brief Lives of Queen Victoria, Florence Nightingale, Baroness Burdett-Coutts, Mrs Beecher-Stowe, Jenny Lind, Charlotte Brontë, Mrs Hemans, Dorothy Pattison.

HISTORICAL CELEBRITIES.

Illustrated.

Comprising Lives of Oliver Cromwell, Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, and the Duke of Wellington.

LITERARY CELEBRITIES.

Illustrated.

Being brief Biographies of Wordsworth, Campbell, Moore, Jeffrey, and Macaulay.

TIGE: His Story.

2/6 net.

By **R. F. Outcault.**

In this book Mr Outcault writes a more captivating, humorous, and telling dog-story for children than has ever been told before. Tige, Buster Brown's faithful friend and companion, tells in an inimitable way the story of his life from his puppyhood until he met Buster. The author's aim has been to do for unfortunate dogdom what *Black Beauty* did for horses—to show to children the rights of animals, and to teach them that their dumb friends should be treated kindly.

BUSTER BROWN ABROAD.

2/6 net. By **R. F. Outcault.**

Buster Brown and Tige were abundantly funny and mischievous at home, and they are no less so abroad, where the wonders of Continental travel do not suppress their individuality. They were told to remain at home, and should never have travelled. They get variety in Paris, on the Rhine, in Switzerland, and in England.

VANISHED.

By **David Ker.**

Five Illustrations by W. Boucher.

Viscount Culverstone, the ward of his uncle, suddenly disappears in a way that arouses strong suspicion against his guardian, John Hawkesleigh. How the uncle searches for the lost youth at home and abroad, finds him after incredible hardships, and triumphantly clears his own character, is fully related.

COSSACK AND CZAR.

By **David Ker.**

Illustrated by W. S. Stacey.

A thrilling tale of the adventures of an Englishman and his son in Russia in the time of Peter the Great, who figures as one of the characters, as do also Charles XII. of Sweden and the famous Mazeppa.

THE YOUNG RANCHMEN.

By **Charles R. Kenyon.**

Illus. by W. S. Stacey and others.

"A stirring story of prairie life, with plenty of buffalo-hunting, adventures with Indians, and other stirring incidents."—*Glasgow Herald.*

THE LOST TRADER.

By **Henry Frith.**

Four Illustrations by W. Boucher.

In this nautical tale Mr Frith describes a mutiny on board the *Lombardy* East Indiaman, telling how the captain was sent adrift, and how the *Hope* privateer sailed to Mozambique, punished the pirates and slavers, and discovered and rescued the long-lost Captain Godwin.

Books at 2s.

By MAY BALDWIN, EDITH C. KENYON, Author of "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN," &c.

THAT LITTLE LIMB.
By **May Baldwin.**
Four Illustrations by Miss Attwell.

A little girl, Gwennie, is always saying the most original things and doing what other people think are mischievous things, hence she is called "that little limb." When Gwennie and her little brother get to be better known they twine themselves round the hearts of every one, and are the means of raising the spirits and improving the outlook of the next-door neighbour in a wonderful way.

OUTSKERRY. By **Helen Waters.**
Four Illustrations by R. Burns.

The reader will find some of the charm of the *Swiss Family Robinson* in this story of the manly and independent Adam and Halcro Sweynson on the lonely island of Outskerry, whither they have been exiled through the cupidity of an employer.

THISTLE AND ROSE.
By **Amy Walton.**
Illustrated by R. Barnes.

The story of a London girl transported to unaccustomed sights and sounds in the country, and in her new surroundings called upon to make a choice between what is right and what is easiest and most pleasing to herself.

PRINCESS AND FAIRY.
By **Lily Martyn.**
Sixty-eight Illus. by W. Rainey.

The wonders of nature are here described in simple and interesting fashion and in narrative form. A book to be read to the little ones, or by themselves, as it opens up to them the beauty, wonder, and delight of common things.

EMINENT WOMEN, and Tales for Girls. Illustrated.

"The Lives include those of Grace Darling, Joan of Arc, Flora Macdonald, Helen Gray, Madame Roland, and others."—*Teacher's Aid.*

BUNYAN'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. Illus. by J. D. Watson. With Index; and Prefatory Memoir by **Rev. John Brown, D.D.,** Bedford.

"The excellent Index alone will make this edition of the masterpiece to be sought after and used."—Rev. A. Whyte, D.D.

SOME BRAVE BOYS AND GIRLS. By **Edith C. Kenyon.**

Tells how boys and girls were brave in the hour of danger for the sake of their families; with anecdotes of brave missionaries, philanthropists, engineers, soldiers, inventors, &c.

THE HALF-CASTE: An Old Governess's Story; and other Tales. By the **Author of "John Halifax, Gentleman."**

OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS: The Dog, Cat, Horse, and Elephant.
With numerous Illustrations.

TALES OF THE GREAT AND BRAVE. By **M. F. Tytler.**

A collection of interesting biographies and anecdotes of great men and women of history—in the style of Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*—written by a niece of the historian of Scotland.

FOUR GREAT PHILANTHROPISTS: Lord Shaftesbury, George Peabody, John Howard, J. F. Oberlin. Illustrated.

TWO GREAT POETS: Shakespeare and Tennyson. Illustrated.

TWO GREAT AUTHORS. Lives of Scott and Carlyle.

TWO ROYAL LIVES: Queen Victoria, William I. German Emperor.

EMINENT ENGINEERS: Watt, Stephenson, Telford, and Brindley.

GREAT WARRIORS:
Nelson, Wellington, and Napoleon.

HEROIC LIVES: Livingstone, Stanley, Gordon, and Dundonald.

ROBINSON CRUSOE.
By **Daniel Defoe.**
Frontispiece by W. Rainey.

THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON. Their Life and Adventures on a Desert Island.
Profusely Illustrated.

BRUCE'S TRAVELS through part of Africa, Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, into Abyssinia. Illustrated.

THE LIFE AND TRAVELS OF MUNGO PARK IN AFRICA.

With Illustrations, Introduction, and concluding Chapter on the Position of Affairs in the Niger Territory.

Books at 2s.

ANTHONY EVERTON.
By **J. S. Fletcher.**

Mr J. S. Fletcher here follows the fortunes of Anthony Everton during a stirring and troublesome time. Master Tatham's ward no sooner leaves home at the age of seventeen than he is plunged into a series of startling adventures, in which he passes through unheard-of dangers, and performs valorous deeds which bring him under the notice of Lord Strafford and the King, by whom he is knighted.

HUGH MELVILLE'S QUEST: A Boy's Adventures in the Days of the Armada. By **F. M. Holmes.**
Four Illustrations by W. Boucher.

Contains much stirring incident and adventure, and many hairbreadth escapes, ere Hugh Melville delivers his long-lost brother from captivity amongst the Spaniards.

THROUGH THICK AND THIN: The Story of a School Campaign.
By **Andrew Home.**
Four Illustrations by W. Rainey.

FAMOUS MEN. Illustrated.

Comprising Biographical Sketches of Lord Dundonald, George Stephenson, Lord Nelson, Louis Napoleon, Captain Cook, George Washington, Sir Walter Scott, Peter the Great, Christopher Columbus, John Howard, William Hutton, William Penn, James Watt, Alex. Selkirk, Sir William Jones, Dr Leyden, Dr Murray, Alex. Wilson, J. F. Oberlin.

TALES FROM CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL. 4 vols., each 2s.

Comprise interesting short stories by James Payn, Hugh Conway, D. Christie Murray, Walter Thornbury, G. M. Fenn, Dutton Cook, J. B. Harwood, and other popular writers.

BIOGRAPHY: Exemplary and Instructive.
Edited by **W. Chambers, LL.D.**

The Editor gives in this volume a selection of biographies of those who, while exemplary in their private lives, became the benefactors of their species by the still more exemplary efforts of their intellect.

MISCELLANY OF INSTRUCTIVE AND ENTERTAINING TRACTS. 10 vols., each 2s.

These Tracts comprise Tales, Poetry, Ballads, Remarkable Episodes in History, Papers on Social Economy, Domestic Management, Science, Travel. &c. The articles contain wholesome and attractive reading for Mechanics', Parish, School, and Cottage Libraries.

Books at 1s. 6d.

THE LITTLE RUNAWAYS.
By **Alice Turner Curtis.**
Illustrated by Ruth Rollins.

A particularly bright and interesting story of two very charming children with quaint and original ideas.

MABEL'S PRINCE WONDERFUL. *New Ed.* By **W. E. Cule.**
40 charming Illus. by W. J. Mein.

Relates how Mabel, a "child-who-believes," passed out of her common everyday life into the hush and stillness of the Old World, with its kings and princes, its castles and palaces, and "all the crowded wonder of the story-books."

ELSIE'S MAGICIAN.
By **Fred Whishaw.**
New Edition.
Ten Illus. by Lewis Baumer.

A pretty story, told with real humour and vivacity, of how a little London girl managed to provide for her mother a much-needed holiday abroad, and brought together a father and daughter who had been alienated for many years.

DOROTHY DOT.
By **E. Westyn Timlow.**
Illus. by H. Roosevelt Richards.

Six-year-old Dorothy Dot, when the story opens, has just arrived for a whole year's visit to Grandmamma. Dot's friends, playfellows, and the mischief she managed to get into, and safely out of, are all sketched with humour and fidelity to child-life.

ELIZABETH; or, Cloud and Sunshine. By **Henley I. Arden.**
Frontispiece by H. A. Bone.

The story of a young woman's faithfulness to duty, and its reward. There are many life-like pictures of English country scenes; while the story closes with an episode of thrilling interest.

FIVE VICTIMS: A Schoolroom Story. By **M. Bramston.**
Frontispiece by H. A. Bone.

Miss Bramston here supplies some natural pictures of school-girl life. The Five Victims are young girls who think themselves miserably ill-used by a good and noble but very plain-looking governess, in delicate health. The children find out the worth of their teacher when placed under another, and all receive a lifelong lesson from the different events of the story.

SUSAN OLIPHANT.

Books at 1s. 6d.

By J. S. FLETCHER, G. M. FENN, Dr ANDREW WILSON, &c.

TALES FOR TOWN AND COUNTRY. 22 Tales and Sketches. By **R. Chambers, LL.D.**, and others.

BUNYAN'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. Index; and Prefatory Memoir by **Rev. J. Brown, D.D.** Illustrated by J. D. Watson.

"The excellent Index alone will make this edition of the masterpiece to be sought after and used."—Rev. ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.

GRACE AYTON, and other Stories for Girls. By **Mrs Lynn Linton, A. B. Edwards,** and **W. Moy Thomas.**

PARLOUR TALES & STORIES. By **A. M. Sargeant, Mrs Crowe, P. B. St John, Leitch Ritchie,** and others.

TALES FOR HOME READING. By **A. M. Sargeant, Frances Brown, Percy B. St John,** and others.

FIRESIDE TALES AND SKETCHES. By **R. Chambers, LL.D., P. B. St John, A. M. Sargeant,** and others.

THE REMARKABLE ADVENTURES OF WALTER TRELAWNEY. Retold by **J. S. Fletcher.** Frontispiece by W. S. Stacey.

An adventure story in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, quaintly and graphically told by the hero, who is in perils oft. He is an eye-witness of the destruction of the Armada, and escapes in a wonderful manner on board an English vessel.

THROUGH STORM & STRESS. By **J. S. Fletcher.** Frontispiece by W. S. Stacey.

An adventure story in which there are descriptions of a mutiny and fire on board ship, life in an open boat, on a desert island, ending by Captain Crib and his two young protégés falling into the hands of the Turks, and being condemned to work in the galleys. The escape from the Turks at Alexandria, under the leadership of John Fox, with two hundred and seventy other Christian captives, forms the climax of an exciting narrative, and is a perfectly true incident.

BEGUMBAGH: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny. By **G. M. Fenn.**

SKETCHES OF ANIMAL LIFE AND HABITS. By **Andrew Wilson, Ph.D.,** &c.

A popular natural history text-book, and a guide to the use of the observing powers. Compiled with a view of affording the young and the general reader trustworthy ideas of the animal world.

TALES OF THE COASTGUARD, and other Stories.

THE CONSCRIPT, and other Tales.

THE DETECTIVE OFFICER, by "**Waters**;" and other Tales.

SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON.

ROBINSON CRUSOE. By **Daniel Defoe.**

THE HOPE OF LEASCOMBE, and other Stories.

The first tale inculcates the lesson that we cannot have everything our own way in this world, and that passion and impulse are often evil counsellors.

THE ITALIAN'S CHILD, and other Tales.

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS. By **W. Chambers, LL.D.**

"Illustrates, by means of a series of anecdotes, the intelligence, gentleness, and docility of the brute creation. It proves abundantly that kindness will obtain more from animals than cruelty. The anecdotes are striking, and in many cases novel, and the book may be warmly commended."—*Sunday Times.*

THE MIDNIGHT JOURNEY. By **Leitch Ritchie.**

THE GOLD-SEEKERS, and other Tales.

THE RIVAL CLERKS, and other Tales.

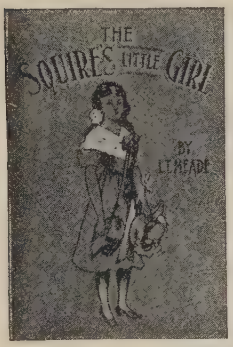
The first tale shows how dishonesty and roguery are punished, and virtue triumphs in the end.

TALES OF ADVENTURE.

Twenty-one tales comprising wonderful escapes from wolves and bears, American Indians, and pirates; life on a desert island; extraordinary swimming adventures, &c.

TALES OF THE SEA. By **G. M. Fenn, J. B. Harwood,** and others.

Books at 1s. By L. T. MEADE, Mrs MOLESWORTH, EDNA LYALL, EDITH C. KENYON, &c.



THE SQUIRE'S LITTLE GIRL.
By **L. T. Meade.**
Frontispiece by A. G. Small.

This tells in a fascinating way how Phyllis, the Squire's little daughter, made friends with the Rectory children, and what remarkably good times they had together. There is some naughtiness on both sides, which brings trouble; but in the end the Squire's daughter and the Rectory children are left as good friends as ever.

LITTLE MARY, and other Stories.
By **L. T. Meade.**

Four simple stories of child-life told with humour and pathos, and each teaching a good moral lesson.

THE BEWITCHED LAMP.
By **Mrs Molesworth.**

Shows the evil and unhappiness which sprang from entertaining and carrying out a wrong suggestion.

THE GREEN CASKET.
By **Mrs Molesworth.**

Three charming stories, each teaching an important moral lesson.

THEIR HAPPIEST CHRISTMAS.
By **Edna Lyall.**

THE LITTLE KNIGHT.
By **Edith C. Kenyon.**

WILFRID CLIFFORD.
By **Edith C. Kenyon.**

Follows to manhood the career of Wilfrid Clifford in his endeavour to emulate the knights of old. It is a story of self-help and self-conquest, and brings out the manly features of the hero.

ERNEST'S GOLDEN THREAD.
By **Edith C. Kenyon.**

A little boy hears the story of Norman Macleod's Gold Thread, and determines to trust in God and do the right, come what may.

JOHN'S ADVENTURES.
By **Thomas Miller.**

Tells how the Rector's boy was lost, stolen by gipsies, and recovered from them.

THE STEADFAST GABRIEL.
By **Mary Howitt.**

CARELESS JANE.
Children's Rhymes Illustrated.
By **Katharine Pyle.**
See page 36.

LASSIE.
By the **Author of "Laddie,"** &c.
Frontispiece by Jessie Wilson.

No reader of this author's *Laddie* has ever been able quite to forget that pathetic story. After a lapse of many years the same writer has written its counterpart, in which the heroine, booked as a nurse for South Africa, stays at home for the apparently less heroic duty of keeping house for a rather shiftless father.

BABY JOHN.
By the **Author of "Laddie,"** &c.

A quaint and pathetic little story, in which a certain millowner, his wife, Baby John, and Alice, a mill-girl, play their part, and show up the evils of selfishness and want of sympathy.

ZOE. By **Author of "Laddie,"** &c.

COLA MONTI; or, The Story of a Genius. By the **Author of "John Halifax, Gentleman."**

A FAIRY GRANDMOTHER.
By **L. E. Tiddeman.**

A realistic story of a London waif, who runs off from a drunken mother, and who after many adventures is adopted by a good old lady in the country, who proves herself a fairy grandmother indeed.

A HUMBLE HEROINE.
By **L. E. Tiddeman.**

UNCLE SAM'S MONEY-BOX.
By **Mrs S. C. Hall.**

GRANDMAMMA'S POCKETS.
By **Mrs S. C. Hall.**

Books at 1s. By E. J. CUTHBERTSON, MARY COCHRANE, E. C. KENYON, &c.

THE SWAN'S EGG. By **Mrs S. C. Hall.**

DUTY AND AFFECTION; or, The Drummer-Boy.

A thrilling narrative of the wars of the first Napoleon.

THE CHILDREN OF MELBY HALL. By **M.** and **J. M'Kean.**

These talks and stories of plant and animal life afford simple lessons on the importance of "Eyes and No Eyes," and show what an immense interest the study of natural history, even in its simplest forms, will produce in the minds of young folks.

MARK WESTCROFT, CORDWAINER. By **F. S. Potter.**

MUTINY OF THE "BOUNTY," and **LIFE OF A SAILOR BOY.**

WONDERFUL STORIES FOR CHILDREN.

By **Hans C. Andersen.**

One of the first forms in which these ever-delightful stories of Hans Andersen were given to the British public.

FIRESIDE AMUSEMENTS: A Book of Indoor Games.

BIOGRAPHIES.

"Excellent popular biographies."—*British Weekly.*

TENNYSON. By **E. J. Cuthbertson.**

Embodies in a simple and interesting narrative the existing information about the late poet-laureate, and affords a key to many of his poems for the young reader.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,

By **Evan J. Cuthbertson.**

Gives in brief and compact form what history, tradition, and research are able to tell us of the life-story of the world's greatest dramatist. An attempt is made to picture the England he lived in, the scenes among which he moved, the people he associated with, and the customs that bound him.

WALLACE AND BRUCE.

By **Mary Cochrane, L.L.A.**

This little book gives the main outline of the lives of the founders of Scottish political freedom. In its preparation the best authorities have been consulted, and here is given in small bulk the results of research only to be found in larger volumes more difficult of access.

WILLIAM I., GERMAN EMPEROR, AND HIS SUCCESSORS.

By **Mary Cochrane, L.L.A.**

QUEEN VICTORIA.

LORD SHAFTESBURY AND GEORGE PEABODY. Portraits.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

NELSON AND WELLINGTON.

THOMAS ALVA EDISON.

By **E. C. Kenyon.**

WATT AND STEPHENSON.

To the story of Stephenson has been added an account of his son Robert, and of the Peases of Darlington; while there is a bird's-eye view, at the close, of railway progress in England since the days of Stephenson.

GENERAL GORDON AND LORD DUNDONALD.

THOMAS TELFORD AND JAMES BRINDLEY.

LIVINGSTONE AND STANLEY.

The story of the opening up of the Dark Continent.

COLUMBUS AND COOK.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

By **Robert Chambers, LL.D.**

Besides the Autobiography, many interesting and characteristic anecdotes of the boyhood of Scott have been added; while the whole has been revised and brought up to date.

HOWARD AND OBERLIN.

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

PERSEVERANCE AND SUCCESS: Life of William Hutton.

STORY OF A LONG AND BUSY LIFE. By **W. Chambers, LL.D.**

Books at 9d. and 6d.

By L. T. MEADE, Mrs MOLESWORTH, Miss EDGEWORTH, &c.

Published at 9d., Cloth, Illustrated.

YOUNG KING ARTHUR.
By VIOLET BROOKE HUNT.
THE LITTLE CAPTIVE KING.
FOUND ON THE BATTLEFIELD.
ALICE ERROL, and other Tales.
THE WHISPERER. By Mrs S. C. HALL.
TRUE HEROISM, and other Stories.
PICCIOLA, and other Tales.
TWELFTH-NIGHT KING.
By MARY GORGES.
JOE FULWOOD'S TRUST.
PAUL ARNOLD.
CLEVER BOYS.
THE LITTLE ROBINSON.
MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY.
MY BIRTHDAY BOOK.

Published at 6d., Cloth, Illustrated.

"For good literature at a cheap rate, commend us to a little series published by W. & R. Chambers, which consists of a number of readable stories by good writers."—*Review of Reviews.*

CASSIE, and LITTLE MARY. By **L. T. Meade.**
A LONELY PUPPY, and THE TAMBOURINE GIRL. By **L. T. Meade.**
DICKORY DOCK. By **L. T. Meade.**
A FARTHINGFUL. By **L. T. Meade.**
POOR MISS CAROLINA. By **L. T. Meade.**
THE GOLDEN LADY. By **L. T. Meade.**
LEO'S POST-OFFICE. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
NESTA; or, Fragments of a Little Life. By **Mrs Molesworth.**
MOLLY AND MOTHER. By **L. E. Tiddeman.**
DADDY'S DARLING. By **L. E. Tiddeman.**
YAP! YAP! The Story of Teddy's Doggie. By **E. C. Kenyon.**
KITTY AND HARRY. By **Emma Gellibrand, Author of "J. Cole."**
NIGHT-HAWKS. By the **Hon. Eva Knatchbull-Hugessen.**
GERALD AND DOT. By **Mrs Fairbairn.**
FRED STAMFORD'S START IN LIFE. By **Mrs Fairbairn.**
MALCOLM AND DORIS; or, Learning to Help. By **Davina Waterson.**
SELF-DENIAL. By **Miss Edgeworth.**
WILLIE NICHOLLS; or, False Shame and True Shame.

Published at 6s. and 3s. 6d. net.

Coloured Picture Books.

Published at 6s.

DENSLOW'S MOTHER GOOSE. Being the old familiar rhymes and jingles of Mother Goose. Edited and Illustrated by **W. W. Denslow.**

"I can recommend with enthusiasm *Denslow's Mother Goose*. Nothing more gorgeously and grotesquely pictorial and attractive has lately struck my eye."—*Punch.*

Published at 3s. 6d. net.

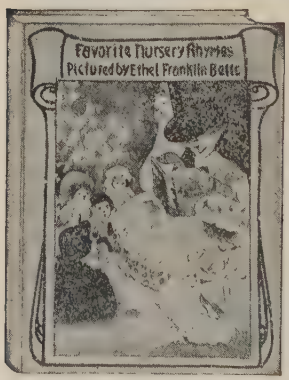
FUNNY BUNNIES.

Verses by **B. Parker.**

Illus. by **N. Parker.**

Companion volume to "The Browns: A Book of Bears."

With Coloured Illustrations and humorous verses describing the jolly times this extraordinary family of rabbits had.



FAVORITE NURSERY RHYMES.
By **Ethel Franklin Betts.**

The nursery rhymes have never been so daintily or so artistically pictured as they are in this beautiful volume.

THE KNIGHT-ERRANT OF THE NURSERY. With charming Coloured Illustrations by **Wm. Parkinson.**

This is a charming volume for the children. In a series of beautifully coloured illustrations, the artist, Mr Wm. Parkinson, illustrates experiences in the life of his clever and imaginative little son, who is constantly picturing himself either at war on behalf of the oppressed or gallantly fighting against tremendous odds. The young knight-errant wields the brush as well as the sword, and his efforts to help his father to depict some of the exciting incidents in which he takes part will be much appreciated, and will afford considerable amusement to old and young alike.

THE UPSIDE-DOWNS OF LITTLE LADY LOVEKINS AND OLD MAN MUFFAROO.
By **Gustave Verbeek.**

By a clever and ingenious arrangement of the pictures, the wonderful adventures of Little Lady Lovekins and Old Man Muffaroo, after being read and discussed in the usual way, may be continued by turning the book upside-down. Every picture and every page has a double story to tell, which increases the enjoyment and adds to the surprise of the children.

Published at 3s. 6d. net.

COLOURED PICTURE BOOKS—*Continued.*

BUSTER BROWN'S ANTICS.

By **R. F. Outcault.**

This year's volume is irresistibly funny, and surpasses any of its predecessors.

1907

Volume.

BUSTER BROWN'S PRANKS. By R. F. Outcault.

Since his advent, Buster Brown has increased the gaiety of nations. In every home he has been welcomed with innocent laughter. This fresh pictorial history of his pranks shows him as clever, ingenious, and amusing as ever, with a dry humour in his Resolutions worthy of Mark Twain. Buster has become the comic imp of the nursery, but older folks chuckle over his doings as well.

BUSTER BROWN, HIS DOG TIGE AND THEIR TROUBLES. R. F. Outcault.

The mischievous tricks of Buster and Tige are so extraordinary that they must be seen to be believed. Buster's motto seems to be, "How to be Good though Bad." He means to be happy whatever else betides, and upsets a good many people in the process. He is quite as entertaining as ever—indeed, more so; and the nurseries which previously hailed him with delight will welcome his reappearance with a chorus of applause.

BUSTER BROWN AND HIS RESOLUTIONS.

By **R. F. Outcault.**

No home or nursery could be dull where Buster makes his appearance, with his fun and pranks, which are continually getting him into trouble. Buster Brown, whose doings are faithfuliy depicted by a humorous artist, is always making good resolutions; the only one he manages to keep is, that he will make people laugh, although he gets a licking every time.

Published at 3s. 6d. net.

COLOURED PICTURE BOOKS—*Continued.*

FOXY GRANDPA'S FROLICS.

By **Bunny.**

The good-natured old gentleman is just as cute as ever, and despite his grandsons' efforts to invent some new trap, they rarely get the better of him.

1907

Volume.

FOXY GRANDPA'S SURPRISES.

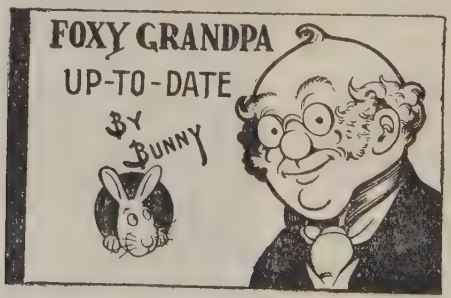
By **Bunny.**

With the children, Foxy Grandpa ranks equal in interest with Buster Brown. The good-natured old gentleman and his mischievous grandsons, who so dearly delight in practical jokes, are familiar and welcome visitors in every nursery. *Foxy Grandpa's Surprises* is a companion volume to *Foxy Grandpa Up-to-Date* and *The New Adventures of Foxy Grandpa*, continuing the series of brightly coloured pictures with many new adventures for Grandpa, who usually, though not always, turns the joke in an unexpected way upon the boys.

FOXY GRANDPA UP-TO-DATE.

By **Bunny.**

Those who have already followed Foxy Grandpa and his funny doings and sayings, and have enjoyed his triumphs over his mischievous grandchildren, have in this volume a fresh series, in which the fun is just as mad as ever; and the boys, clever as they are, seldom get the better of their elders. Grandpa, Uncle Alex, and the boys furnish much mirth and innocent amusement.



THE NEW ADVENTURES OF FOXY GRANDPA.

By **Bunny.**

Foxy Grandpa is sure of a hearty reception wherever his funny doings and sayings and his mischievous grandchildren become known. Every page contains some laughable episode, with good-humoured pictures that appeal at once to old and young alike. In the encounter with boyish wits, grandpa always comes up smiling, and goes one better every time.

Published at 3s. 6d. net.

COLOURED PICTURE BOOKS—*Continued.*

THE FUN THAT GLUE MADE. By **Clara Andrews Williams.**
Drawings by **George Alfred Williams.**

This is a most ingenious and clever picture book, which affords deft-handed children an opportunity of constructing a book for themselves. It is on similar lines to last year's volume, *The House that Glue Built*, which proved an immense favourite.

THE HOUSE THAT GLUE BUILT. By **Clara Andrews Williams.**
Drawings by **George Alfred Williams.**

The series provides the rooms of the house—parlour, dining-room, kitchen, &c.—with all their furniture. The latter the child can cut out and paste upon the pictures of the rooms according to the suggestions given in the text, or he may follow out his own ideas in making an attractive and permanent toy. There are fifteen plates: seven of rooms, seven of furniture, and one containing the family.

CHRISTMAS STOCKING SERIES.

Excellent little volumes for the nursery.

Published at 1s. 6d. net.

Mr Jewett's name upon a child's book is sufficient assurance of its cleverness and its merit. Few books in recent years have equalled in popularity his famous *Bunny Stories*, which first appeared in *St Nicholas*, and sell in large numbers with each recurring holiday season.

SNUGGY BEDTIME STORIES.
By **John Howard Jewett.**

LITTLE CHRISTMAS.
By **John Howard Jewett.**
Illustrated by Anna M. Upjohn and Others.

CON THE WIZARD.
By **John Howard Jewett.**
With Illustrations in Colour and in Black-and-White.

THE DENIM ELEPHANT.
Illustrated in Colours by **Emily Carter Wight.**

Published at 1s. net.

BUSTER BROWN'S MAXIMS FOR MEN. By **R. F. Outcault.**

While these resolutions are humorous, and some of them merely humorous, there are many in which the observations are full of shrewd wisdom, conveyed in a smart and incisive style similar to that of "The Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to His Son."

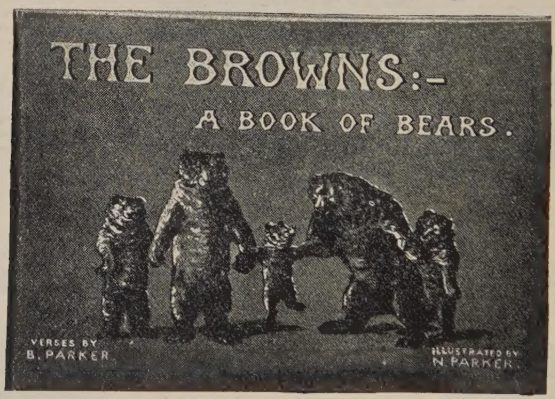
Published at 3s. 6d., 2s. 6d., and 1s. 6d.

Picture Books.

Published at 3s. 6d.

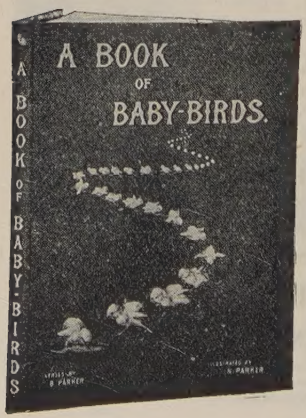
THE BROWNS. A Book of Bears. Verses by **B. Parker.** Pictures by **N. Parker.**

This picture book is by the author and artist of that charming volume of last season, *Baby Birds*. "The Browns" are a truly remarkable family of bears, and astonishingly human in their dispositions. The little folks who get this volume will spend many happy hours in looking at the humorous and clever pictures representing "The Browns" at breakfast, at school, at a party, on holiday, singing, pillow-fighting, &c.



BABY-BIRDS. Verses by **B. Parker.** Pictures by **N. Parker.**

These pages are gay and bright with robins, cuckoos, lapwings, thrushes, nightingales, wrens, owls, and blue-tits, and will be a perfect treat to the happy child who is so fortunate as to obtain the book. The baby birds are winsome and attractive, and pictures and letterpress are alike calculated to help young and old to love and admire our feathered friends.



Published at 2s. 6d.; also in paper boards, 1s. 6d.

A BUNCH OF KEYS.

By **Margaret Johnson.**
Illustrated by Jessie Walcot.

"It is full of beautiful pictures and most interesting stories, and will bring joy into the hearts of all the little ones who are lucky enough to have a copy given to them. One of the best books for juveniles we have seen for a long time."
—*Schoolmaster.*